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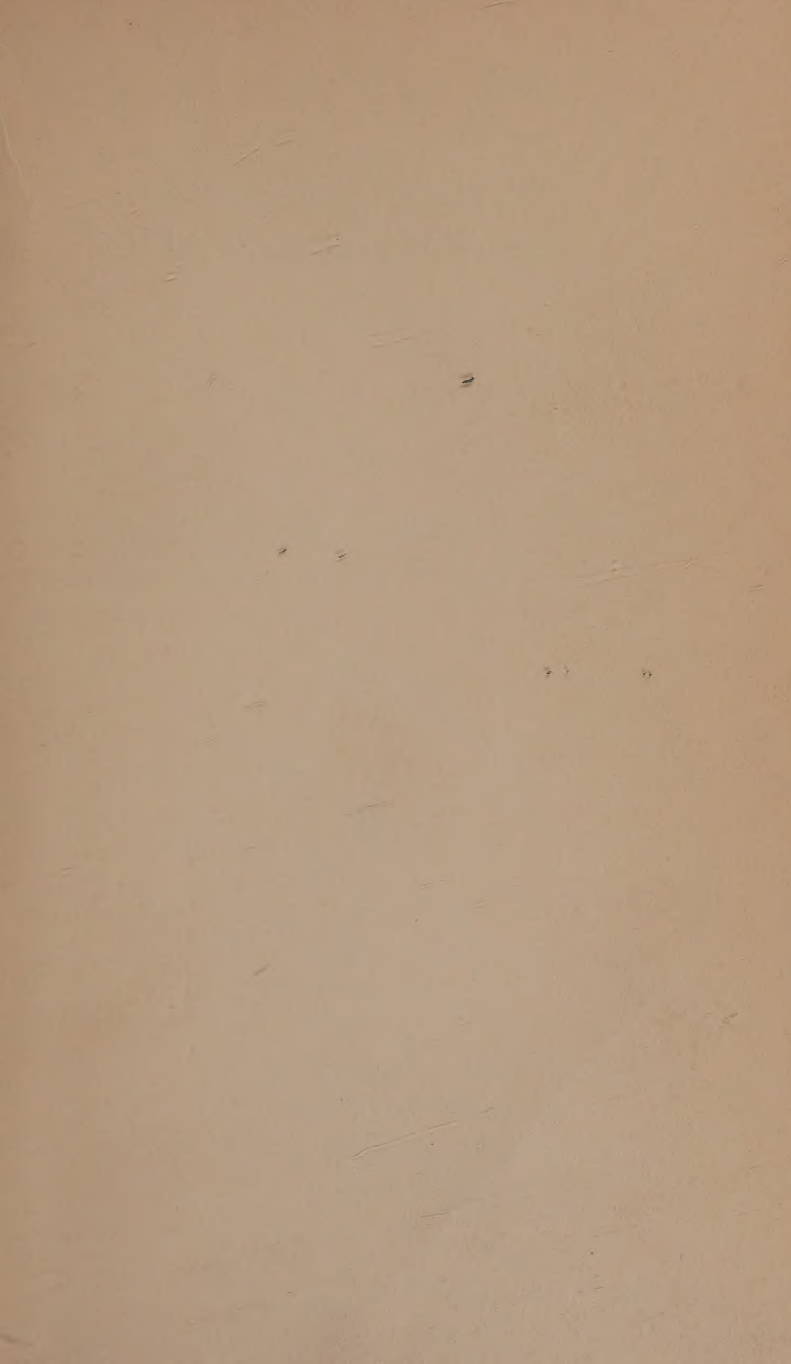
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The Making of Poetry

A Critical Study of
Its Nature and Value

By

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ARTHUR H. R. FAIRCHILD

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To
MY MOTHER

PREFACE

THIS book might be called a critical essay toward a consistent view of poetry. I claim no finality for this view. I only hope that it will be of some real service to teachers and students whose interests and activities centre in literature; to the gentle-hearted reader whose mind, untouched by the sneaping frost of complacency, is eager to find the well-springs of his higher pleasures; to the man of affairs, professedly literary in taste or not, whose purged vision enables him to recognise in poetry the highest manifestation of principles that control all his best practical attainments.

If this critical study, by its nature as inadequate to its purpose as it is imperfect in achievement, will help to show a little more clearly how poetry is made, what its nature is, what the need and value of it are in our daily life, so that poetry may be more widely seen as touching "this uneasy heart of ours" with "morning radiance"; if it will help to reconcile conceptions commonly thought of as remotely idealistic with those dominant in activities all about us; if, even by implication, it will in some measure suggest the final dependence of our civilisation upon our esteem and cultivation of the higher ranges of

sensibility; if, finally, it will lead to a more extensive reading, joyous yet discriminating, of poetry, somewhat neglected of late in our "sabbathless pursuit of fortune"; the best hopes of the author will have been richly realised.

Poetry itself needs no advocate; calls for no defender. She is an elusive Muse. Neglected and ignored, she, in common with the other arts, takes vengeance, silent but unremitting, in narrowness of intellect, of morals, and of sensibility; propitiated and cultivated, she bestows her rewards bountifully in catholicity, openness, and flexibility of mind, and especially in the fine yet strong cultivation of those emotions upon which all the higher, as well as the best practical, expressions of life are more and more steadily seen to depend.

Approached from the point of view herein set forth, this subject offers a peculiar temptation to mount what Lamb calls "the airy stilts of abstraction." However ill my success, I have sought to avoid this temptation. I have likewise sought to avoid the direct statement of standards of literary judgment; the statement and the discussion of such standards make up the task of formal literary criticism. To facilitate the acceptance of certain ideas not usually set forth in a work of this kind perhaps, I have used selections from poems generally familiar. Occasionally, where lines were inaccessible, I have raked "the dust of old oblivion" to quote from memory. The

elementary conceptions of the first two chapters may be cursorily passed over by the more practised reader.

To the books, from Plato to Benedetto Croce, I stand in general indebtedness; those whose influence I am most conscious of are the *Poetics* of Aristotle and the *Kritik of Judgment* of Immanuel Kant. For helpful suggestions I am indebted to Mr. D. Nichol Smith, Goldsmiths' Reader in English in Oxford University; and to my colleagues, Professors H. M. Belden, R. D. Miller, and F. M. Tisdell. Professor Miller also kindly read the proof. An indebtedness which goes deeper than these I have acknowledged on another page.

A. H. R. F.

COLUMBIA, MISSOURI,

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CHAPTER I

Can Poetry be Defined?

The more one sits and thinks over the creative process, the more it confirms itself as "inspiration," nothing more nor less.

BROWNING.

CHAPTER I

CAN POETRY BE DEFINED?

I.

IN the history of literature no finally satisfactory definition of poetry has yet appeared. Definitions there are, of course, in plenty; they lie scattered down the ages. But all these definitions prove to be unsatisfactory as they fall into one or other of two classes. For either, on the one hand, they describe only that tangible element in poetry which is capable of being analysed or, on the other, disregarding all analysis, they embody precisely that poetical element which it is their object to define. One type of definition is the analytical, the other may be called the poetical; each is unsatisfactory largely because it lacks what the other contains.

Of these definitions, the first or analytical type has been framed chiefly by critics and students of poetry. According to their analysis, poetry is "the form of literature that embodies beautiful thought, feeling, or action, in melodious, rhythmical, and (usually) metrical language, in imaginative and artistic constructions." Or: "Nothing

belongs to real literature unless it consists of written words that constitute a carrying statement which makes sense, arranged rhythmically, euphoniously, and harmoniously, and so chosen as to connote an adequate number of ideas and things, the suggestion of which will call up in the reader sustained emotions which do not produce undue tension, and in which the element of pleasure predominates, on the whole, over that of pain." Or, still more formally: "Poetry is literature, usually of a high degree of Human Interest, which, in addition to its Human Interest, has in it an added *Æsthetic Interest* due to the arrangement of some easily recognisable and constantly present concomitant of thought-formulation into a form of *æsthetic appeal* for which an appreciative *Æsthetic Sentiment* has been gradually developed in the minds of those who habitually think by means of the language in which the poetry is written."

In contrast with this type of definition stand the definitions of the poets themselves. Poe tells us simply that poetry is the "rhythmical creation of beauty." Wordsworth says: "All good poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings." Shelley says poetry may be defined as "the expression of the imagination;" it is "indeed something divine."¹ Sidney tells us that poetry "is an art of imitation . . . a representing, counterfeiting, or figuring forth; to speak

metaphorically, a speaking picture, with this end,—to teach and delight.” Milton says poetry should be “simple, sensuous, and passionate.” Coleridge says: “Good sense is the body of poetic genius, fancy its drapery, motion its life, and imagination the soul that is everywhere, and in each; and forms all into one graceful and intelligent whole.”

Each of these types of definition, the critic's and the poet's, evidently tells a part of the truth, but none in either type is convincing; they all leave us, in some way, unsatisfied. The definitions based on analysis, though they have the advantage of being explicit, tell us very little about the essential nature of poetry itself; those which ignore analysis and are themselves poetical, though they carry with them an emotional suggestiveness as to what poetry is, are vague and intangible; they bring home to us no exact and precise conception of poetry. One group of definitions is true to fact; the other is true to sentiment. Those true to fact miss the truth to sentiment, where feeling is the final law; those true to sentiment ignore the fact, where facts must underlie the sentiment. The makers of the one type of definition walk Shelley-wise, forgetful of earth, with their heads in the clouds; the makers of the other type bruise their knees on the stone-paved court of the logician as they search in the crevices for a delicate flower.

II.

[The truth is that no finally satisfactory definition of poetry ever can be made; that is, no definition of poetry can ever be made which will be generally accepted. There are definitions of biology and chemistry and logic which are accepted by scholars and regarded as true and satisfactory; but of poetry no such definition has yet been made; and, what is still more important, no such definition ever can be made. Some things, such as logic, are of a nature which admits of satisfactory definition; other things, such as beauty, are of a nature which does not admit of satisfactory definition. Poetry belongs in the latter group. The nature of poetry makes a conclusive and final definition of poetry impossible.

What is it in the nature of poetry that makes this so? Why is it not possible to define poetry satisfactorily, as we define logic? The explanation lies in what is, after all, a very simple fact, one which we see and notice not, or at least one whose significance we too commonly fail to catch. It is this: all poetry begins and ends in feeling. This statement does not mean that poets do not often begin with an idea or a thought or an image as a starting point in the making of a poem; it means simply that, both for poet and for reader, as soon as there is real poetry there is feeling. Nor does the statement mean that feeling is all

there is in poetry,—that poetry is not something more than feeling. For it is. Often, as in Pope, poetry is replete with ideas; often, as in Dante and in Milton, it is rich in thought; everywhere, too, in organising its material, poetry either directly conforms to or implies laws of Nature and of personality, and it may, accordingly, be said to incorporate these laws; moreover, poetry, using language as its medium of expression, leaves its creator in the form of a logically connected whole, and comes to the reader in a form which can make its immediate appeal only in an intellectual way. Still, it is true that poetry of all kinds must always begin with feeling in the mind and soul of the poet, and end with feeling in the emotional nature of the reader. Always the ideas, the thoughts, or the laws of life expressed in poetry are given some degree of emotional setting; they are, in some way, accompanied by feeling. We know poetry as an art through the æsthetic experience; and the distinctive mark of the æsthetic experience is its emotional character. Lacking this experience we may know something about the historical, the intellectual, or the moral side of poetry, but we do not know poetry for what it is in itself. Poetry, then, may be said in all cases to be addressed finally to feeling; it is known, in the last analysis, for what it is, in and through feeling. Only as the poet feels can he make poetry; only as the reader has feeling aroused does he come to know what poetry really is.

There are other elements in poetry; feeling is not all there is in it; but wherever feeling is absent, whether in poet or reader, poetry is not known in its true nature.

III.

In order, then, to define poetry in such a way as to reveal its true nature, it would be necessary to describe the feeling out of which poetry springs or to which it gives rise. Wordsworth's statement that poetry is the spontaneous overflow of feeling, and Milton's requirement that poetry must be passionate both imply this; other poets suggest the same idea.

But we meet a difficulty here. What is required, psychology tells us, cannot be done. Feeling can in no case be directly described or defined. Feeling is something that is original and underived. It is not composed of other elements in experience; nor can it be resolved or analysed into other elements. Unlike most things, it cannot be explained in terms of something else. I cannot describe the feeling that I have as I pass my hand over a piece of silk, or when I touch a cold stone, except in terms of feeling. Jealousy, the dictionary may tell me, is "the state of being jealous," but I am really not enlightened by the statement; I can know what jealousy is only by experiencing the feeling itself. I cannot actually describe my joy or my sorrow, my fear or my delight;

I can only name the things or events that gave rise to these feelings, with the hope that, by naming the things or events, other people will have a somewhat similar feeling aroused, and so understand mine. Everywhere I have the same experience; I cannot describe or define my feeling, except in terms of feeling, and that is no definition at all.

Turning to poetry, I meet this same truth. Poetry is not, of course, the result of an attempt actually to describe or define feeling, but it is commonly the result of the attempt to express or reveal feeling, and always, as I have said, it begins and ends in feeling. But here again I find myself unable to speak directly of the feeling which poetry arouses in me. In my attempt to indicate its special character I may call this feeling poetic, but, doing so, I am merely saying that it comes from poetry; I am giving no exact account of the distinctive nature of this feeling. I am, indeed, no more able to describe the feeling that poetry arouses in me than I am to describe the feeling I have from touching a piece of silk or a cold stone.

Nor has the poet, in this respect, any divinely bestowed advantage. Even he cannot tell us directly what his feeling is. Tennyson, in *Break, break, break*, could not heave his heart into his mouth. He does not tell us directly how he felt. He could not. All he could do was to name objects the sight or sound of which, through

images, directly or by contrast, gave rise to or were associated with his feeling of loneliness and grief; and, having done this, he can only trust that his reader, calling up appropriate images and grouping them in the manner suggested by the lines, will have a somewhat like feeling aroused. It was evidently because Tennyson realised sharply, almost painfully, his inability to express his feeling directly that he wrote the lines:

“And I would that my tongue could utter
The thoughts that arise in me.”¹

Cowper does not tell us what his feeling is when he writes:

“The twentieth year is well-nigh past,
Since first our sky was overcast;
Ah, would that this might be the last!
My Mary!”

Nor does Shelley really tell us how he felt, in the lines:

“Yet now despair itself is mild,
Even as the winds and waters are;
I could lie down like a tired child,
And weep away the life of care
Which I have borne and yet must bear.”

Not even he can tell us directly how he felt. No poet can. For of poetic feeling, as of all other

¹ For notes see end of volume.

kinds of feeling, it is true not only that it cannot be described or defined, but that it cannot even be directly expressed or revealed.

We return, then, to our original statement, that no finally satisfactory definition of poetry ever can be made. And the reason, we see, is this: poetry begins and ends in feeling; to define poetry satisfactorily one must, accordingly, define the feeling out of which poetry springs and to which it gives rise; but to do this is not possible; feeling is of such a nature that it cannot be defined; no exact logical definition of it can ever be made; poetry itself, therefore, can never be satisfactorily or finally defined.

IV.

To acknowledge this fact might, at first blush, seem to make all further discussion about poetry or attempts to explain its nature and function a mere beating of the air. What value can there be in discussing something the nature of which it is never possible to define?

It is, indeed, the answer to this pertinent question that really sets us our whole task. To know that no finally satisfactory definition of poetry ever can be made is to realise that, although poetically expressed suggestions concerning the nature of poetry are almost always helpful and valuable, the attempt to reduce these suggestions to something specific can end in little

more than vapid emotionalising. It is to realise something more important, namely, that in the attempt to determine the nature and function of poetry the only part about which definite and precise statements can safely be made is the material and the processes which go to make poetry what it is. Uniformly the feeling that is aroused by poetry, or the thought that is conveyed with an emotional setting, is aroused or conveyed through the use of a definite kind of material and the working of consistent processes. Through the use of this material and the working of these processes, feeling is produced in the mind of both poet and reader. But material and processes alike are distinct from feeling. They do not take the place of it; they do not even directly represent it; but they do give rise to it. What we may call the material of poetry, and the processes which go to make it what it is, are the accepted means of producing poetic feeling, and they may be said to be inseparably connected with it. And these, the material and the processes, it may be truly said, can be described. Some account of the material out of which poetry is chiefly made can be given, and some description of the processes mainly involved in the making of poetry can be made. But, on this side of definiteness, nothing more can be done. Only the describable element of poetry can ever be compressed into any exact account of what it is.

We have, then, several rather specific questions

to ask: 1. What is the material out of which poetry is really made? 2. What are the chief processes or kinds of activity involved in the making of it? 3. What, from this point of view, is the real nature of poetry? 4. What is the need, and what is the value of poetry? It is to the attempt to answer these questions that we now turn.

CHAPTER II

The Material of Poetry

The business of poetry is with images, and not with words.
MACAULAY.

CHAPTER II

THE MATERIAL OF POETRY

I.

IF the average person were asked what poetry is or is made of, he would not improbably respond by taking a volume from his shelves, turning to some favourite poem, such as *The Cotter's Saturday Night* or *The Psalm of Life*, and saying: "This is poetry" or "This is my notion of what poetry ought to be." Without analysing the question further, and probably without being altogether satisfied with his own answer, he thinks of a poem as beginning at a certain place in a particular volume, as having a definite number of stanzas, each with a uniform number of lines, and as made up finally of printed pages. To him poetry is something external. It is something tangible and concrete. It is something found chiefly in books. Poets make it and print it; other people buy it and read it.

Nor is such a notion unnatural. Nothing could be more convenient to refer to, when speaking of poetry, than the volume or the printed page. Even the connoisseur, taking up a volume,



says, "These are Tennyson's poems," or, "These are Shakespeare's plays." But, for one seeking an exact notion of what poetry is, and endeavouring to determine what it is really made of, this notion is obviously naïve and inadequate; it is used only as a matter of convenience. Words printed on a page, no matter what form or order they might assume, could themselves, of course, never really make a poem; in and of themselves they have no value whatsoever; they stand quite evidently for something else; at the best, they are only signs or symbols signifying something beyond themselves. No one thinks of calling the pages that make up a volume of Shelley's poetry beautiful in the same sense that he speaks of a sunset or of the Sistine Madonna as beautiful. The printed page may be necessary as a mechanical means through which poetry may become generally known, but of itself it is obviously not the real material out of which poetry is made.

II.

Can a like statement properly be made about language as uttered sounds?² Is there special virtue in the spoken word? The spoken word in poetry has for its direct symbol the printed word. What is true of the one will, therefore, presumably be true of the other. And this is so. Language as uttered sounds does not of itself make poetry any more than the words on



the printed page make poetry. Language is the accepted medium of expression for poetry, just as marble is for sculpture, or pigments and canvas are for painting; and without language, it is safe in general to say, there could be no poetry. Yet it is not language of itself that makes poetry what it is; not the medium alone makes the art. The verses of the South African Bushman, even if we understood his tongue, would not be poetry to us; so, too, the noble language of Milton, arranged in what we have accepted as poetic form, and rising often into periods that are called sublime, fails to touch the secret chord in many a heart. And this fact means that hearing the language of a poem does not of itself ensure one's catching the poetic note; so far, the spoken word holds no more virtue than the printed page. Language, though it is the accepted medium of expression for poetry, does not in and of itself, even in poetic form, make poetry what it is, any more than a figure carved out of marble always makes a statue, or pigments merely spread upon canvas necessarily make a painting. Like printed words, the language of poetry, merely as uttered sounds, stands for something else.

There is, however, a possible exception to the statement that language of itself cannot make poetry. I shall have occasion later to consider the point involved, and so I shall only refer to it here. Broken into the rhythm and melody of

verse, language as uttered sounds merely, quite apart from its meaning, independent even of its suggestive value, often does produce an effect which many people, and especially children, call poetical. Chimes of music, heard through the medium of language-sounds and accompanied by magic, intangible images, stir the hearer's mind with a fine delight which he calls poetic. Nor can his word be altogether refuted. To the hearer, it is poetry. But, finally, this kind of effect cannot be made identical with poetical effect. The two are not coterminous. Of the musical effect of versified language, as of language itself, we must still say that it refers to something else.

III.

What is this something else? If the material out of which poetry is really made is neither the printed page, nor language, nor even the musical effect produced by versified language, what is it? To what, in poetry, does each of these primarily refer, and for what do they really exist? What, so to speak, is the raw material out of which poetry is made?

The answer need not be equivocal: it is the mental image. It is to the mental image that the language of poetry, in printed or spoken form, primarily refers; it is chiefly to serve the mental image, as we shall see later, that verse itself is

used in poetry. The mere arousing of mental images is not itself the ultimate end of poetry; that, I have said, is feeling; but the immediate end which is served by the printed page, by the spoken word, and by verse in poetry is the mental image; this it is that is the fundamental element; this is the raw material out of which poetry is chiefly made. Because the poet cannot directly reveal his feeling, because he cannot actually convey his thought—which, to become poetical, must always have some degree of emotional setting—he is forced to use mental images. These images he gives token of through language, his aim being to reproduce in the minds of his hearers or readers phases of thought and feeling which he himself has had, and which seem to him to be of value. And so he does not merely tell us that he feels grief and loneliness; he groups together certain images, which he represents by language, and gives us *Break, break, break*; he does not write a systematic treatise to show that perverted ambition results in crime and soul-death; he groups images of characters in such a way as to reveal this truth in its emotional setting, and gives us *Macbeth*. By his unique method of dealing with images, and by a novel and significant combination of them, the poet reveals to us what he feels and what he thinks, and he produces in us that distinctive kind of feeling which we call poetic. Every process that the poet uses in the making of poetry in some way refers finally to the

mental image. Indeed, lacking the mental image, what we call the poetic experience would be practically impossible.

IV.

A general notion of what a mental image is can easily be obtained. On my desk there lies an open copy of Scott's poems, and this line catches my eye:

"The rose is fairest when 't is budding new."

There is no rose on my desk, nor in the room where I am writing; yet I am able, without effort, to call up in my mind a picture of what Scott here describes. As I see the rose in my mind's eye it is, as the line has suggested for me, "budding new." Nothing has been said about its colour, but I happen to see it as pink. The leaves which clasp the bud are green. The stem is of a lighter green, and has thorns on it. All this I can see quite distinctly in my imagination, even while I write; and if I close my eyes and think about the rose, I can add more and more details until I see it very distinctly and vividly. What I see in imagination is a mental image of a rose. I am imagining or, to speak more accurately, I am imaging a rose. In the absence of the object itself, I have something in my mind which I say stands for the object; and I call this an image

of it. The word "image" comes from the Latin *imago*, meaning copy or likeness. An image is, therefore, a copy or likeness of something. Hence my image of a rose is in some sense a mental copy or likeness of a real rose. It is the representative in the mind for some rose or roses I have seen, and I recognise it as being, in the main, similar to one. The mental image is the picture in the mind which stands for the object itself.³

For everything I ever see, hear, touch, taste, or smell; for everything, indeed, that I ever come to know through any of my senses I can call up some kind of mental image. Images themselves, as we shall see, differ in value in the making of poetry; in general, poetry uses chiefly images of sight and of hearing, and even among these there is a principle which sets the flower above the stone, and man above both. Varied uses, too, are made of these images; they are presented with different degrees of vividness in poetry, and wrought into a variety of forms, according to the purpose of the author. In Keats's *La Belle Dame sans Merci* the images are vague and intangible, and carry merely an emotional suggestiveness; in Wordsworth's *Resolution and Independence* they are definite and vivid, and imply, in their grouping, an important idea; in Pope's *Essay on Criticism* they are subdued and colourless, and are weighted with ideas; in *Paradise Lost* they are graphic and imposing, and signify a world-theme; but in all types,

forms, or classes of poetry, despite the special modifications of use, the ultimate thing is the mental image. Poetry is addressed finally to the feelings; its theme must, then, always carry with it some intrinsic emotional effect:—a situation of deep human interest, as in *Othello*; a beautiful object or scene, as in Keats's *Eve of Saint Agnes*; a feeling or emotion, as in *The Green Linnet*; a lofty conception, nobly conceived, as in the *Divine Comedy*; but always this emotional appeal is effected chiefly through images; always it is, finally, the images that make the poetry what it is.

V.

[If feeling is the beginning and end of poetry, why this recourse to imagery? Why this circuitous and indirect method of arousing feeling? The answer lies in a fact which is highly significant for the making of poetry: it is because *there are no images of feeling*. If I am asked to call up an image of a rose, of a tree, of a cloud, or of a skylark, I can readily do it; but if I am asked to feel loneliness or sorrow, to feel hatred or jealousy, or to feel joy on the return of spring, I cannot readily do it. And the reason why I cannot do it is because I can call up no image of any one of these feelings. For everything I come to know through my senses, for everything in connection with what I do, think, or feel I can call up some kind of mental image; but for no kind of feeling

itself can I ever possibly have a direct image. The only effective way of arousing any particular feeling that is more than mere bodily feeling is to call up the images that are naturally connected with that feeling.

I realise this more fully as I turn again to Scott's line. As I read the words I readily enough get an image of the budding rose. But that is quite evidently not all the poet expects me to do. He says the rose is "fairest" when it is budding new. "Fairest" does not really tell me anything about the rose; rather it signifies a feeling. But of this feeling, this personal attitude toward the rose, I can get no image whatsoever. Try as I may, I cannot do it. But as I read the line, the image of the rose comes before my mind; I catch the author's hint in the word "fairest"; and as I dwell upon the image, there is gradually aroused in my mind a feeling which I believe corresponds in a general way to the poet's own feeling. This feeling is evidently that of the beauty of promise, as Wordsworth calls it, a feeling which sets "the budding rose above the rose full blown," and which this image naturally arouses. To miss this feeling is, in this case, to miss practically all the poet has to give. It is not the image of the rose merely that the poet wishes me to get, but the feeling connected with the rose. Just as the words in the line are there, not for their own sake, but for the sake of the image which they arouse, so the image is for the sake of the feeling

to which it in turn gives rise. If the poet could himself call up, whenever he so desired, any particular feeling, and if, merely by naming that feeling, he could arouse a like feeling in the minds of others, the use of mental imagery in poetry would be unnecessary, and the whole nature of poetry would be entirely transformed.

VI.

The necessity for this recourse to imagery in order to reveal and arouse feeling can easily be illustrated. Let us consider first a poem from *In Memoriam*, where the direct object is to arouse feeling. Tennyson, in restless grief, goes at early morning to visit Hallam's house:

*"Dark house, by which once more I stand
Here in the long unlovely street,
Doors, where my heart was used to beat
So quickly, waiting for a hand,*

*"A hand that can be clasp'd no more—
Behold me, for I cannot sleep,
And like a guilty thing I creep
At earliest morning to the door.*

*"He is not here; but far away
The noise of life begins again,
And ghastly thro' the drizzling rain
On the bald street breaks the blank day."*

I have put in italics those words which stand for the more important images. Some are of

sight, such as "dark house" and "long unlovely street"; others are of touch,—“a hand that can be clasp'd no more”; others, again, are of sound,—“the noise of life begins.” These and other images the poet groups together in his mind, and that grouping he signifies through language. He selects these images, and he makes this special grouping because he believes that, in this way, he can most effectively signify what his feeling is; the images go naturally together and they have a common feeling tone. But never once, though it is grief almost unendurable, does the poet tell us directly what that feeling is. To attempt to do so, he well knows, would be useless. He does not say: My grief over the death of Hallam is almost unendurable this morning. That would barely move us at all. All he does, and all he can effectively do, is to signify through language the character and grouping of such images as will best, in his judgment, intimate what that feeling is. The reader follows the language of the poet; he has, presumably, seen a “dark house” and a “long unlovely street;” he has seen and felt the “drizzling rain”; he has heard the “noise of life” begin; he can, therefore, call up and group corresponding images of these things as he reads. As a result of this particular grouping of the images aroused by these lines, there is stirred in the heart of the reader a feeling akin to the poet's feeling; the reader enters into, and in some measure duplicates, the experience of the poet;

he feels something of the loneliness and sorrow that the poet felt; he has the poetic experience of this kind of grief.

What is true of this poem, which deals especially with feeling, is true of all poetry, even the most intellectual; it is chiefly through images that poetical effect is finally reached. For even if the truth contained in poetry does not always come in the form of living convictions, pulsating with warm emotion, neither does it always come in the form merely of cold, dead terms of intellectual propositions. Take an extreme example: Pope's *Essay on Man*. It is an intellectual poem; but everywhere there is a use of imagery, and, apart from the verse-form, what lends much of the poetical quality to these propositions is the imagery. We may see this in such a passage as the following:

"In lazy Apathy let Stoics boast
Their Virtue fix'd; 't is fix'd as in a frost;
Contracted all, retiring to the breast;
But strength of mind is Exercise, not Rest:
The rising tempest puts in act the soul,
Parts it may ravage, but preserves the whole.
On life's vast ocean diversely we sail,
Reason the card, but Passion is the gale;
Nor God alone in the still calm we find,
He mounts the storm, and walks upon the wind."

The same is true of Homer, of Dante, of Milton, of Goethe, of Shakespeare: it is through the use

of mental imagery that their ideas, conceptions, and world-truths are revealed.

To present intellectual truths, freed from their emotional setting, is the task of science; science deals with laws and principles, with general assertions, with classes and groups of objects. Poetry, on the other hand, deals usually with individual persons, particular experiences, things, or events. At times, however, poetry does approach the domain of science; it deals, as in Pope, with man in general and with truth phrased in abstract or general form. Even then, however, it makes use of imagery; the abstract conception is, to some extent, revealed through something concrete; it is embodied in a typical instance. In this way the poet touches our feelings. He brings his truth home to us with a force and warmth of conviction that could be effected by no purely philosophical or formal treatise. Emotion connects itself most readily with concrete things, with particular persons and events, not with abstract ideas. When, therefore, the poet occasionally desires to deal with some form of abstract truth he resorts to the use of imagery. This is the only effective means the poet can find of expressing his thought in its setting of emotion. Of the expressing of thought in poetry, then, as of the expressing or revealing of feeling, it is true that effectiveness depends upon the use of mental imagery. The feeling that is aroused or the thought that is apprehended results mainly

from the effective grouping of images. Indeed, we may in general say that without images in poetry there could be no thought poetically revealed, no æsthetic feeling aroused.

VII.

If what I have said thus far is true, our first question, "What is the material out of which poetry is really made?" is answered: it is the mental image. And, if this answer is satisfactory, the way is cleared for the answering of our other questions. As preliminary to the attempted answering of these other questions, however, we may make the following general statement: What is called poetry, whether it belongs to primitive or cultured man, consists, both for poet and reader or hearer, finally in such a grouping of images as produces a distinctive kind of pleasurable feeling, the accepted external sign of which images, grouping, and feeling is language, spoken or written. Or, if for the moment we may disregard language as an external element, we may say that the making of poetry, the nature of poetry, and the need and value of poetry are all revealed through or signified by *the character of the images and the manner of their arrangement*, plus the pleasurable feeling which results from that arrangement.

CHAPTER III

The Making of Poetry: How the Poet first Deals with his Material

I am a part of all that I have met.—TENNYSON'S *Ulysses*.

CHAPTER III

THE MAKING OF POETRY: HOW THE POET FIRST DEALS WITH HIS MATERIAL

I.

FROM the material of poetry we turn to the making of poetry. Three rather distinct processes or kinds of activity are involved. The first relates chiefly to the manner of dealing with things and persons themselves, images of which the poet desires to use in his poetry; this process, for the lack of a better name, I call personalising. The second process has to do with the grouping of the images selected by the poet; and this I call combining. The third is versifying. This process does not stand on precisely the same level as the others, and for two reasons. In the first place, versifying has to do directly with language; language is an external thing used, as we have seen, in poetry mainly for the sake of the mental image; versifying, therefore, is only indirectly related to the mental image which is the subjective or internal element out of which poetry is chiefly made. And, in the second place, versifying seems not to be so invariable a process in the making of

poetry as personalising and combining are; it is not, apparently, always indispensable in order to produce what we call poetic effect. But, allowing for this partial exception of verse, the details of which will duly be provided for, we may say that the central processes or kinds of activity involved in the making of poetry are three: personalising, combining, and versifying. With each of these we have now to deal. The first is personalising.

II.

It is an interesting fact, which needs only to be pointed out to be recognised, that everything with which a person ever deals in any way is thought of and treated as something more or less like himself. In the life, action, or state of things and other people, each man finds something of himself or something like himself. Everything, animate and inanimate, seems to possess some degree of a common nature; there is a homogeneity of man with man and of man with things; all share in a common life. I realise this as I look about me. The paper on which I write *lies* or *rests* upon my desk; my desk *stands upon* the floor; my window *looks upon* a road which *goes, runs, or leads to* the town of X.; an automobile *runs puffing* by; an *exhausted* horse which *carries* too great a load and is *resting* by the roadside is *frightened*; the house across the way is *old*, it *leans forward* and *looks* as if it would soon *fall*; the eaves-trough, which

should *catch* the rain, *hangs down* at one end, *held* at the other by only a few nails; the tree which *stands* by the house *spreads out* its branches which *move* or *sway* in the breeze, and its leaves *tremble*, *dance*, or *move*, according to the feeling with which I regard them. Everything I see and everything I think of seems to be but a part of myself; it acts in some degree as I myself do, or it carries out actions which, directly or indirectly, I myself know. So the sun and moon *rise* and *set*; waves *rise* and *fall*, *strike* and *toss*; the wind *blows*, *sighs*, *murmurs*, *whistles*, *laments*; vines *climb*; towers *reach* into the air; mountains *rise* before one; paths *wind*; columns *rise*; walls *support* or *hold up* a roof; landscape is *smiling*; flowers are *innocent* or *pure*; duty *calls*; necessity *forces* or *compels*; conscience *appeals* or *pricks*; men *shout*, *sing*, *play*, *love*, *hate*, *are ambitious*, *proud*, *grow jealous* and *suspicious*, *think*, and do a thousand things, each one of which has meaning and becomes intelligible and reasonable to me only as I see some phase of my own life or action in them. Everywhere I turn I find something of myself reflected. Things about me take on life, and the life they take on appears to be of a piece with my life; they all seem to be more or less *like me*. And they are like me, finally, because, so far as each thing will permit, I read my experiences into them. I project myself, as it were, into things; I infuse and breathe life into everything with which I come into contact. Subject to the limits set by the nature of each, I read my own exper-

iences into the action or state of things and of persons about me. If I see a slender column supporting a great weight, a roof too heavy for its frame or projecting overfar, or a wall out of plumb, I am made uncomfortable because I feel as if I myself were supporting the weight, or were about to fall. Looking upon the figure of Atlas I have an unpleasant sense of strain because I perceive that his strength is not equal to his burden, so that with Nash I exclaim:

"Atlas-like, to prop heaven on one's back
Cannot but be more labour than delight."

In every person I see or come to know, in every object with which I come into contact, I find something of myself or something like myself. But I find it there only as I am able to project myself into it, only as I find some likeness between the person or object and myself. Only to the degree that I am able to endow the life, action, or state of each thing or person I know with something of myself, only as I can regard it as a partial self, or as having some of my own experiences, am I able to understand, interpret, and explain it to myself. Everywhere there is a going out of my own nature; I identify myself with all that exists in thought, action, or person, not my own. Everywhere I carry on a process of self-projection; I put myself into the life and action of people and of things; I humanise them.

III.

This process or activity I call personalising. The term is not attractive, but I find no other. Personifying will not do. When we personify we regard the object or conception as a person, as when we speak of "Father Time"; but when we personalise, as when we speak of paths "winding" or columns "rising," we do not, as a rule, realise that the words signify action which belongs, not to the things themselves, but to persons. Personalising is a wider and deeper process than personifying; it includes personifying. To personify is merely to personalise in an intensive way and to a special degree.

This process of personalising is carried on by every one, primitive and cultured man, child and adult. Each, with more or less truth and for varying purposes, deals with everything as more or less like himself. To the primitive man, everything has a spirit more or less like his own. Spirits "cast up the fire in the volcano, tear up the forest in the hurricane, spin the canoe round in the whirlpool, inhabit the trees and make them grow"; the sound of the waterfall or the noise of the wind is the voice of an unseen being who makes "sounds and sweet airs, that give delight and hurt not"; the morass, where fellow tribesmen become mired and die, is a malignant being who seeks to devour him and his tribe.

Children carry on the same kind of activity.

"One little fellow, when tracing the letter L, happened to slip, so that the horizontal line formed an angle, thus: $\angle$. He instantly saw the resemblance to the sedentary human form, and said: 'Oh, he's sitting down.' Similarly, when he made an F turn the wrong way and then put the correct form to the left, thus F ∇ , he exclaimed, 'They're talking together!'" So dolls readily become parents or children; tin soldiers take on life; generals give audible commands; men fight and die; animals throw off their carnivorous habits, associate with human beings, and enjoy a privilege of speech measured only by the acquired vocabulary of their human director.

Adults in cultured society, as I have suggested, do the same kind of thing: they attribute something of themselves to things and persons. Everywhere there is a going out of our nature. More or less, according to the nature of the object and of our relations to it, we identify ourselves with persons and things about us. Some people are more "like us" than others are. We enter into their lives with sympathy and with understanding of their motives; we feel at home with them; we enjoy their company; our lives seem to articulate with their own. They do so because we are able, even with truth, to read our own thoughts and feelings into their actions, and to explain readily all that they say and do; we find in them parallels of our own experiences; we understand them after the analogy of our own lives; as Hamlet says: "To

know a man well, were to know himself." The same is true of objects, animate and inanimate; some admit more, some less, of ourselves into them. In this respect animals, probably, stand next to persons. They have the power of moving about, and they appear to think, feel, and will even as we do; they parallel a large part of our life. Plants and trees are less like us than are animals; they are more limited; they stand still and move only their "heads and arms"; what life they have does not appear to be conscious life—they do not appear to think or feel or to have any power of choice; yet all we know or ever can know about plants and trees is finally but a reflection of ourselves. A stone is still less like us. Trees and plants have life, and they have some power of motion; but a stone has neither. It cannot move; it has no life. Yet, again, whatever we think of or feel about the stone, whether it be what the stone "feels like" lying on the cool, damp earth, or the pressure of its weight, must be in terms of our own experience.

Everywhere we turn, this truth holds. Some things parallel more, some less, of our life. Where the action is not identical with our own, it is in some way analogous. To the irrational and illogical way, uncorrected by science, in which the primitive man deals with things as more or less like himself, we give the name animism; to the child's only slightly more rational way of doing the same thing we often apply the name play or make-

believe; but it is this same process, carried out only with keener insight and more rational organising of the elements involved, that cultured man must employ; for at no stage, high or low, do men ever really get away from thinking of persons and things and acting toward them as more or less self-like.

IV.

[Of all men it is the poet who makes the most distinctive use of this process of personalising. Every man, mere slave to the soil or soul-illuminated genius, whether he knows it or not, personalises; he humanises things; to a greater or less degree, and with some measure of truth, he reads his experiences into things about him; he cannot, indeed, avoid doing so. But the poet employs this process in ways and for ends which most men never reach, and many do not, of themselves, even perceive. The poet's keener perception of more refined and tenuous relations than those apprehended by most men enables him to personalise with greater intensity, subtlety, and delicacy.

So distinctive of the poet's work is personalising that it may be said to precede and underlie all other processes. It is the fundamental activity involved in the making of poetry. It is the distinctive process which affects the raw material, in the form of images, out of which poetry is chiefly made; it is the process which, through truth to life or through conscious and fantastic

modifications of it, most clearly signifies the artistic aim and achievement of the poet; it is the process which, since æsthetic feeling cannot be directly expressed or revealed, most effectively determines the nature of poetry, making it consist primarily in a grouping of personalised images. It is not an independent process; it does not stand alone; it cannot, except in a logical way, be separated entirely from other kinds of activity which go to make poetry what it is; yet it is the one process without which the others would have no significance or value. Personalising, the reading of one's experiences into things and into people, is what the poet must first carry on, however unconsciously, before he can make poetry, and it is this kind of activity that is most distinctive of his work.

That this is so we may gather from the words of poets themselves. Speaking of the poetical character, Keats says: "It is not itself—it has no self—it is everything and nothing. A poet . . . has no identity—he is *continually in, for, and filling some other body*.⁴ . . . When I am in a room with people . . . not myself goes home to myself, but the identity of every one in the room begins to press upon me, so that I am in a very little time annihilated—not only among men; it would be the same in a nursery of children." Elsewhere he says: "If a sparrow come before my window *I take part in its existence and pick about the gravel*." Goethe describes a not dissimilar experience. Speaking of some etchings of sheep by the painter

Roos, he said: "I always feel uneasy when I look at these beasts. Their state, so limited, dull, gaping, and dreaming, excites in me such sympathy, that *I fear I shall become a sheep, and almost think the artist must have been one.* At all events, it is most wonderful how Roos has been able to think and feel himself into the very soul of these creatures, so as to make the internal character peer with such force through the outward covering." Wordsworth seems to have felt the same kind of identification of himself with things. "I was often unable to think of external things as having external existence," he says, "and I communed with all that I saw as something not apart from, but inherent in, my own immaterial nature. Many times while going to school have I grasped at a wall or tree to recall myself from this abyss of idealism to the reality."

Not alone in their comments upon their poetry do we find poets echoing the belief that

"Minds that have nothing to confer
Find little to perceive."

In their poetry they frequently express the same idea: "We receive but what we give," says Coleridge,

"And in our life alone does Nature live:
Ours is her wedding-garment, ours her shroud!
And would we aught behold, of higher worth,
Than that inanimate cold world allowed

To the poor loveless ever-anxious crowd,

Ah! from the soul itself must issue forth

A light, a glory, a fair luminous cloud

Enveloping the Earth—

And *from the soul itself must there be sent*

A sweet and potent voice, of its own birth,

Of all sweet sounds the life and element!"

And again he says:

"for I had found

That outward forms, the loftiest, still receive

Their finer influence from the Life within;—

Fair cyphers else."

Wordsworth is even more explicit:

"To every natural form, rock, fruit, or flower,

Even the loose stones that cover the highway,

I gave a moral life: I saw them feel,

Or linked them to some feeling: the great mass

Lay bedded in a quickening soul, and all

That I beheld respired with inward meaning."

Elsewhere he says:

"To unorganic natures were transferred

My own enjoyments."

Later he cries:

" Oh! mystery of man, from what a depth

Proceed thy honours. I am lost, but see

In simple childhood something of the base

On which thy greatness stands; *but this I feel,*

That from thyself it comes, that thou must give,

Else never canst receive."

Byron says:

"I live not in myself, but I become
Portion of that around me . . .
 Are not the mountains, waves, and skies a part
 Of me and of my soul, as I of them?"

Whitman tells us of a child who

"Went forth every day,
 And the first object he look'd upon *that object he*
became,
 And that object became part of him for the day
 or a certain part of the day,
 Or for many years or stretching cycles of years."⁵

Browning, only more crabbedly, describes the same kind of activity. "No less, man," he says,

"bounded, yearning to be free,
May so project his surplusage of soul
In search of body, so add self to self
 By owning what lay ownerless before,—
 So find, so *fill full*, so *appropriate forms*—
 That, although nothing which had never life
 Shall get life from him, be, not having been,
 Yet, something dead may get *to live again*.

"I can detach from me, *commission forth*
Half of my soul; which in its pilgrimage
 O'er old unwandered waste ways of the world,
 May chance upon some fragment of a whole,
 Rag of flesh, scrap of bone in dim disuse,
 Smoking flax that fed fire once: *prompt therein*
I enter, spark-like, put old powers to play,
 Push lines out to the limit."

Shakespeare, says Coleridge, "darts himself forth, and passes into all the forms of human character and passion . . . becomes all things, yet for ever remaining himself."

V.

The poet, then, according to his own confession, personalises; he enlarges and dilates his own personality by projecting his life into things and persons about him. And he retains in his images, we now observe, the full measure of himself that he puts into persons and things. His images, so far as we can judge from the printed page, reflect the same degree of personalising that he has carried on with objects themselves; often they reflect even a higher degree of personalising, because the poet has a greater freedom in dealing with images of things and of persons than he could well have in dealing with things and persons themselves. Wordsworth, transferring his own enjoyments to "unorganic natures," tells us it is his faith

". . . that every flower
Enjoys the air it breathes."

Shakespeare, projecting himself into the lives of men, prince and buffoon alike, has given us images of unsurpassed vividness and fidelity to life. Milton, turning to the supernatural to represent the

conflict between the ultimate forces of good and evil, reflects himself in the imposing images of God, of his angels, and of Satan. It matters not what the medium may be, man, nature, or the supernatural, the general process is the same. The poet puts himself into things, and his humanising of them is reflected in the images which he makes use of in his poetry.

That the poet does read his experience into persons and into things, even into abstract ideas, and that he reflects and at times intensifies that personalising in the images he makes use of in his poetry, can be gathered from any page, and almost any line, of poetry. He does not say, "fill in the tiresome hours" but "*entertain the irksome hours*"; not "a hill in the distance" but "a hill *retired*"; not "he was careworn and jaded" but "*Care sat on his faded cheek*"; not "the morning follows closely upon the night" but "the morning *steals upon* the night"; not "I do not know what conspiracy is like" but "conspiracy, I do not know how it *tastes*"; not "the skies are dark" but "the skies *look grimly*." So he says: "on his crest *sat Horror* plumed"; thoughts that "*wander* through eternity"; "high walls *fear* no assault or siege"; "*shuddering* horror"; "*labouring* moon"; "the sea *mocks* our frustrate search on land;" "*sleepy* drinks"; "the air most *sweet*"; "the day *frowns* more and more"; this affliction "*has a taste as sweet* as any cordial comfort." So Shelley, loving the intangible, addresses night:

"Swiftly *walk o'er* the western wave,
Spirit of Night!
 Out of the misty eastern cave,
 Where all the long and *lone daylight*,
 Thou *wovest dreams of joy and fear*,
 Which *make thee terrible and dear*,—
Swift be thy flight!"

Pope, turning to reason as the guide of life, says:

"Hope humbly then; with *trembling pinions* soar;
 Wait the *great teacher Death*; and God alone adore.
 What *future bliss*, he gives not thee to know,
 But gives that *Hope* to be thy blessing now.
Hope springs eternal in the *human breast*:
Man never Is, but always *To be blest*."

Milton, dealing with Nature, writes these lines.

"As when from mountain-tops the dusky clouds
Ascending, while the north-wind *sleeps*, o'erspread
Heaven's cheerful face, the *low'ring element*
Scowls o'er the landscape dark'nd snow or show'r;
 If chance the radiant *sun with farewell sweet*
Extend his ev'ning beam, the fields *revive*,
 The birds their notes *renew* and bleating herds
Attest their joy, that hill and valley *rings*."

And Wordsworth, describing the surroundings of an old church, says:

"The earth was *comfortless*, and, *touched* by faint
 Internal breezes, *sobblings* of the place
 And *respirations*, from the roofless walls
 The *shuddering* ivy dripped large drops."

But it is not merely separate images or even small groups of them that are personalised in this way. The poet's subject as a whole, the central image, figure, conception, or whatever it may be, is levelled up, within the limits of truth, to the point of human interest and value—it is, to some degree, humanised. Let us take an extreme example. In his preface of 1800, Wordsworth says he has (in opposition to the extremes of the eighteenth century poets) utterly rejected personifications "as an ordinary device to elevate the style"; and his purpose, he tells us, is "to imitate, and, as far as possible, to adopt the very language of men." The *Ode to Duty* was published seven years later, but Wordsworth seems not to have modified his views essentially. We may, accordingly, expect the poet to avoid not only personification but any unusual degree of personalising in this poem. What does he do? A glance will convince any one. Throughout the entire poem this abstract conception of duty is personalised in a most striking way. Duty is the "Stern Daughter of the Voice of God"; she sets free from "vain temptations," and "calm'st the weary strife of frail humanity"; her "eye" is on those who know it not; she has "saving arms," and gives "firm support"; she utters a "mandate," accepts service, and controls others; she is a "Stern Lawgiver," yet has a "smile" upon her face, and "fragrance" treads in her "footing"; she preserves the stars from wrong, and keeps the heavens "fresh and strong"; she is an "awful

Power." Even striving to avoid the usual degree of poetic personification, and endeavouring to adopt or to imitate the language of men, Wordsworth is unable, giving poetic expression to his conception of duty, to escape the inevitable projection of himself into his subject.

So it is everywhere in poetry; the flowers in Wordsworth; the men and women in Shakespeare; the supernatural creations of Dante and of Milton, —images of all these, whether in individual phrase and line or in central conception itself, reflect the original personalising of the poet. Into man the poet most completely projects himself; he sees into him, touches the heart of his mystery, sees out of him, understands his goings and his comings, and breathes the words which he speaks. Language, of course, alike for poet and reader, is the external sign or symbol for the images that inhabit the mind. True, as a sign or symbol of images, language must always be imperfect and limited; for even

"If all the pens that ever poets held
Had fed the feeling of their masters' thoughts,

.

Yet should there hover in their restless heads
One thought, one grace, one wonder, at the least
Which into words no virtue can digest."

Yet, imperfect and limited as the representation must be, most poets would doubtless echo the words of their master when he says:

"Every word doth almost tell my name,
Showing their birth, and where they did proceed."

VI.

The poet, then, does evidently enter into the life of things and of persons about him, and he retains, in the images that he uses, the measure of himself that he puts into them. But the poet has here an advantage. He has a point of view which gives him more freedom than most men have. In their outlook upon the world, most men hold what may be called a practical point of view. They ask, "What is the use of this to me now? Is it directly and immediately of some practical service?" Trees, however beautiful, are for lumber and fuel; meadows for cultivation and the fruits of commerce; waterfalls, however magnificent, for power and light; animals for service, clothing, and food; men, very often, are labouring or commercial or intellectual entities, not human beings; everything is measured by its immediate usefulness; most men, doubtless as the result of fixed conditions of life, are, as Elizabeth Barrett somewhere says, "fond of steam." That they are so is, of course, only common sense from one point of view. But the poet has a point of view which, whatever be its comparative worth, is at least different. To him the world is too much with us. He takes a disinterested view of things and persons. He is interested, not for the sake of what he can get out

of them for himself, but for what they appear to be in themselves. He finds in them a larger measure of value than a merely personal one. He has "precious feelings of disinterested, that is, self-disregarding joy and love," as Wordsworth characterises it. He regards the beauty or the æsthetic aspect of things; and this, whatever else it may be, is something other than a purely personal interest.

When the poet sees a field of grain on a hillside by a lake, he does not think of it as a crop; he sees only how

"The sylvan slopes with corn-clad fields
Are hung, as if with golden shields,
Bright trophies of the sun!
Like a fair sister of the sky,
Unruffled doth the blue lake lie,
The mountains looking on."

When he sees a tree bare of its leaves, he does not think of the amount of building material or fuel it would afford; he compares it with a ruined choir, where late the sweet birds sang. When he sees a cloud, he does not regard it as a mere presage of weather; he thinks of it as "labouring" and "resting" on the mountain-tops, or as bringing "fresh showers for the thirsting flowers," and laughing as it passes "in thunder." When he meets a group "of sondry folk," "wel nyne and twenty in a companye," he is "of hir felawshipe anon." Free from moral and religious prejudice, actuated by no mere mercenary motive, he throws

himself with abandon into the life alike of sinner and of saint, moved only by a deep desire to know the heart of man. To see things in the light of self-interest merely, however necessary and justifiable at times such a view may be, is still to see them in a limited way. The poet is free from this view; he is free from the view of things which regards what Spencer calls the "life-serving functions." It is a principle in life that the stronger the interest one has in a thing the more of himself he can put into it or find paralleled in it. The poet, more interested, more liberal and more independent than most of his fellow-men, accordingly puts more of himself into things and into persons than can other men.

In consequence, the images which the poet uses have a fuller and richer degree of personalising than have the images of most men; they have more life and colour. To the poet, sleep is not merely a "state of repose or quiescence"; it is

". . . son of the sable Night,
Brother to Death, in silent darkness born,"

or it "knits up the ravell'd sleeve of care." Day is not merely "the time of sunlight between the ending of one night and the beginning of the next"; it is invited as if it were a person:

"Come, cheerful day, part of my life to me;
For while thou view'st me with thy fading light
Part of my life doth still depart with thee."

So, "sharp" frosts have "constrained" the earth until a "kindly" thaw "unlocks" it with "mild" rain; the "tender" blade "peeps" up to "birth," and straight the green fields "laugh" with "promised" grain; man's task is "sore"; haste is "sweaty"; the floods "clap their hands," and the mountains "break forth into harmony." Everywhere the poet's imagery bespeaks a delicate and subtle personalising which the poet has been able to carry on in consequence of his greater freedom and his larger sweep of vision.

VII.

Still, the poet is not free. A god in his sphere, he has still not an open course to power. In the first place, the images which he makes use of are not all of equal value. There is a rising scale. The principle according to which images grade themselves is the degree to which their corresponding objects will admit of truthful personalising. Some objects admit more, some less, of the poet into themselves; some more nearly parallel his life than others do. This personalising is reflected in the images. There is, therefore, a rising scale which places animate nature above inanimate nature, the locomotory above the non-locomotory, conscious life above non-conscious life. Roughly arranged, it might place things somewhat as follows: stone, earth, fire, water, plant, animal, bird, man. Such a scale is, of course, not fixed,

except in the respect that it ends always in man; for though each thing with which man ever comes into contact reflects something that is in him, it is only his fellow-man that reflects him perfectly to himself; only in him is he able to find the duplicate or parallel of all his experiences; only in him does he completely "find" himself. The image of man, whatever the poetic form, whatever the poet's theme, is finally the highest type of image that can be used in poetry.

Constrained to observe the natural limits set by each image, the poet adapts himself to this scale. Intuitively he recognises the capacity, as a carrying medium for human emotion or thought, of each type of image. So Wordsworth tells us that a stone is seen to "lie couched" on the top of an eminence, but he would not tell us, except in the wildest flight of fancy, that it enjoyed the air it breathed. A star, the poet may tell us, is "still steadfast, still unchangeable," but he says the lark is "laughing and scorning." Edgar, in *King Lear*, speaks of the

". . . *murmuring surge*
That on the unnumber'd *idle* pebbles *chafes*,"

but Edgar himself, as one of the characters in the play, is part of the poet's projection of himself, not into the life of the sea, but into the life of man. So Wordsworth's *To the Cuckoo*, perfect of its kind, could never equal *Hamlet* or *Macbeth*. No poet, be he never so lavish in

his art, could make it so. Even to Wordsworth the cuckoo is at most

“. . . an invisible thing,
A voice, a mystery.”

It is the symbol of the deep joy that the poet feels when, on recalling the happy-associations of boyhood, the “golden time” of youth seems to be renewed, and the commonplaceness of objects about him temporarily vanishes. But, even at its best, this is but one emotion. It is not a whole character. It touches life at one small side only. A cuckoo could never admit, it could never parallel or symbolise, so wide a range of our experiences as can *Hamlet* or *Macbeth*; the central figure in one case is a bird, in the other a man. With whatever success the poet may reveal his feeling, then, the poem as a whole is limited merely because the central image is what it is. Only a limited range of human feeling can be symbolised by, or connected with, the cuckoo.

So it is in all poetry. The images vary in value; they are of different degrees of worth. The measure of that worth or value is the degree to which, always within the limits of truth, each corresponding object admits into itself the life of man. If it admits much, as does man himself, it is of high worth in the making of poetry; if it admits but little, as does a stone, it lies close to the outer pale of poetry; it is of small value. The

making of poetry is dependent first upon the kind or character of images used.

This is the first reason why the poet is not entirely free.

VIII.

Another condition affects the poet's use of images. This is the relatively fixed connection in which some things stand. If I look at a bare tree I can readily change my point of view from thinking of the lumber it would furnish, to thinking of it as a "ruin'd choir"; but if I look at a tub of butter I find myself able to think readily of but one thing—its use. Its colour may be identical with that of a beautiful sunset I have seen, but I am unable to see any beauty in it because of the fixed connection which the thing itself has in my mind. For the same reason it is almost impossible for me to see as full a measure of beauty in a grape-vine as I see in a honeysuckle, or as much in a tomato-plant as in a buttercup. Animals, for this reason, are often of lower æsthetic value for poetry than they would otherwise be. In the degree to which they parallel his life, they should stand next to man; but because those with which we are most familiar furnish us with food, or render us service, they stand in a relatively fixed connection of utility. A cow or a horse, thought of from the point of view of service, is not a poetical subject. On the other hand, as objects

are freed of the idea of service, use, and ownership, they become, so far as this condition is concerned, more "poetical"—ruins more so than a millionaire's mansion, an old mail-coach more so than a new automobile, an old arm-chair (no longer fit for use) more so than a new mahogany one. The reason is that these things are relatively free from the idea of use or service. Poetry is "free"; it therefore can make little use of such images as, through definite suggestions of use, service, or ownership, "stop" the mind.

At times, of course, the poet does make use of images of things which have practically fixed associations with the idea of use, service, or ownership; but when he does so, if he really makes poetry, he swamps the suggestion by giving these images some new or added connection with human life. Burns, in his *Cotter's Saturday Night*, says:

" . . . now the supper crowns their simple board,
The halesome parritch, chief o' Scotia's food;
The soupe their only hawkie does afford,
That 'yont the hallan snugly chows her cood."

Images of supper, board, porridge, milk, appear not so poetical or æsthetic, they are not so free, as are those of mountain, tree, and stream. The former group naturally arouse thoughts of use and life-serving functions; but the poet is able to admit these images here because they are sub-

ordinated to a familiar type of human feeling. If they were used simply for their own sake they would be unæsthetic.

What the poet usually does, of course, is to select images of things that are "free." Things in nature, despite the efforts of some men to arrogate the earth and the waters under the earth unto themselves, are not thought of as the special property of any one. The sun, moon, and stars; the sky, clouds, and winds; the birds, trees, and flowers, belong alike to all. Even the tree that grows in my garden is not altogether mine, however I may wish to regard it so. My neighbour can at times enjoy its shade; he can always admire its beauty of form and colour; he can draw from it suggestions of a life without haste yet without rest, which may sink deep into his life; in a very significant way my tree may be most truly his.

It is of images especially which are in this way free that the poet chiefly makes use. Wordsworth declared it his purpose to deal only with "incidents and situations from common life," yet in the main he employs images representing objects which in no way suggest the idea of use, service, or ownership. In the *Reverie of Poor Susan* some of the images employed are: corner of Wood Street, daylight, thrush, spot, silence of the morning, bird, mountain, trees, volumes of vapour, river, vale, green pastures, dale, pail, cottage, nest, earth, heart, heaven, mist, hill, shade, stream, colours, eyes. Out of a total of nearly fifty images, only

two, meadow and pail, can even suggest use or service. Wordsworth himself, the self-professed apostle of "humble and rustic" life, unconsciously selects images which leave him free from thoughts of this kind.

IX.

As will have been suggested, personalising, as a central process in the making of poetry, assumes a variety of forms. The reading of a physical condition into something else, as when Gray says:

"The ploughman homeward plods his *weary* way"

is perhaps the most common. The reading in of aspects of mental life or of qualities of character is also common, as in Benedick's

"Thy wit is as quick as the greyhound's mouth; it catches."

Things that can only be conceived are dealt with in the same way, as when Macbeth calls his soul "mine eternal jewel"; or when he says:

". . . My way of life
Is fall'n into the sear, the yellow leaf."

Dependent upon personalising in its primary form are other forms which, at first glance, may not appear to be connected with it. Examination will show, however, that they are all finally reducible to the one original process.

(1) What has been read into nature can, of course, be read back again. Shakespeare reads back in the lines:

“In me thou see'st the glowing of such fire
That on the ashes of his youth doth lie,
As the death-bed whereon it must expire
Consum'd with that which it was nourish'd by.”

Milton does the same thing in:

“. . . more deaf
To prayers, than winds and seas.”

In these lines the original process seems simply to be reversed; but the reading back depends upon the original process. In such expressions as “the memory be green,” though the antecedent personalising is not so evident, the reading back still depends upon the same original process, for even “colour and form, light itself, are but affections of our human organs of perception.”

(2) In such expressions as:

“. . . tangl'd in the fold
Of dire necessity”

we have the reading of a personalised situation into an abstract conception.

(3) Two or more purely physical things are frequently joined on the grounds of some similarity, the common source of which is an original

personalising. We may see this in Wordsworth's lines:

" . . . I saw a crowd
A host, of golden daffodils;
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

"Continuous as the stars that *shine*
And *twinkle* on the milky way."

Here, as elsewhere, the perception of similarity depends upon the recognition in different objects of some common quality which has had its original source in the poet's own mind and heart.

(4) Finally, there are degrees of truth in personalising. (a) Deliberate violation of what is true or possible we call fancy. The lines on Queen Mab and her equipage in *Romeo and Juliet* illustrate this:

"Her waggon-spokes made of long spinners' legs,
The cover, of the wings of grasshoppers,
The traces, of the smallest spider's web,
The collars, of the moonshine's watery beams."

Here the violation of truth and reality is open and avowed. Fancy entertains; there is no expectation that her vagaries will be taken literally and believed. (b) Sometimes half-fanciful personalising is used to give a touch of magic or witchery, as when Whittier writes:

"And through the glass the clothes-line posts
Looked in like tall and sheeted ghosts."

(c) Sometimes the personalising is intended to be true and serious, but is false or overstrained. It is commonly so in eighteenth century poetry, where mere abstractions, such as ambition, anger, hope, despair, melancholy, and the like, are personified in an extravagant way. Collins writes:

"With eyes upraised, as one inspired,
Pale Melancholy sat retired."

Gray writes:

"Let not Ambition mock their useful toil."

Personalising is strained and unnatural in other cases where the poet's art fails him. It is so, I think, in Whittier's lines:

". . . the June sun warm
Tangles his wings of fire in the trees."

In Tennyson's line:

"And every kiss of toothed wheels."

Such expressions may result from the play of "an excited state of the feelings," as Ruskin says; but there is probably a difference between actual misuse of personalising and some of the legitimate cases of it which Ruskin calls "pathetic fallacy."

All these varied kinds of expression, then, falling commonly into the form of metaphors and similes, and revealed especially through the distinctive use of verbs and adjectives, are finally

reducible to one. It may appear that the reading in is from nature to man, or from one thing in nature to another thing; and these processes may at first seem to be distinct and independent. But they are not. They are simply unrecognised variations of the one central process which I have called personalising. The comparison of one thing with another, as of daffodils with stars, for example, takes on meaning and significance only as one has first been able to find paralleled in each something of his own experience. The process is simply a modification of a deeper one by which one first finds himself or some phase of his experience paralleled in things other than himself. Personalising as a central activity, like all general principles, expresses itself chiefly as a tendency. It is not absolute; it does not appear directly in every word, line, or even phrase in poetry; yet it is the deepest law of its being. It is the one activity without which, following in some measure the standards of truth, there could be no making of poetry.

X.

In conclusion, let us test this principle of personalising in a simple way. Let us see if it is true that, in general, to produce poetic effect there must be some degree of personalising. I shall take the expression "brief candle" in Macbeth's speech:

"She should have died hereafter;
There would have been a time for such a word.

To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day,
To the last syllable of recorded time;
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
The way to dusty death. Out, out, *brief candle!*
Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage
And then is heard no more."

There is a magic in the expression "brief candle" which I have never known any one to deny. What is the secret of it? A candle is a commonplace enough object; in itself it is not a poetical thing; it is something useful, something with regard to which the idea of use and ownership naturally arises; it stands low down, as an inanimate thing, on the scale of images which culminates in man. Yet, as Shakespeare has used it, it is a central image in a consummate bit of poetry. What has he done to give it such distinctive worth?

He has personalised. Here lies the main secret of the worth of this expression. The outlook of Shakespeare's characters is, as he represents them, always most truly signified by the particular things into which they project themselves and in which they find their chief satisfaction. At first Macbeth's life and joy were in battle and victory, in the big hope and broad ambition for distinction and renown. That ambition becomes perverted. Macbeth's thoughts turn to daggers and blood. Retribution is swift. Macbeth falls into the sear, the yellow leaf; he has "lived long

enough." Life, endless, almost, in its promised possibilities, passing on through faith into a "life to come," has mockingly swung its far-seen end into full view; the purpose and the significance of men's deeds have swiftly faded out; each day dies; dusty death ends all; the poor player struts "his hour" upon the stage, and then is heard no more; life is "brief." It is precisely this intense feeling of the brevity of life that Shakespeare makes Macbeth read into or find paralleled in a burning candle. And there is justification for selecting this particular object. A candle is not, of course, really "brief"; it is short, and it burns for a relatively short time only. But we feel at once that it would be absurd for Macbeth to say, "Out, out, short candle!" What Macbeth is really thinking about is not a candle, not even the short burning-period of a candle, but life. "Short," therefore, would not do; it is too physical; it belongs to the object itself. What really justifies the term "brief" is the parallelism between Macbeth's life, as he now sees it, and a candle. Neither lasts for long; each implies a limit of time; both are about to go "out." The expression "brief candle" is, then, true to fact and true to sentiment; it is no mere pathetic fallacy. Shakespeare, therefore, in the light of his intuition, does not apply to the word "candle" an adjective appropriate directly to the object itself; he uses a word which signifies how Macbeth himself reads into the candle, or finds paralleled in it, an impor-

tant part of his central experience at this moment. "Brief" crystallises in a word precisely the feeling which now so intensely affects Macbeth. It is a perfect example, in unobtrusive form, of what I mean by personalising.⁶

CHAPTER IV

The Making of Poetry: The Combining of Images

I am less unhappy than the rest, because I have a mind replete with images, which I can vary and combine at pleasure.

Imlac, the poet, in JOHNSON'S *Rasselas*.

CHAPTER IV

THE MAKING OF POETRY: THE COMBINING OF IMAGES

I.

THE second process in the making of poetry is the combining of images. Like personalising, this process is not independent; it does not stand alone; it is merely one phase of a total creative activity carried out by the poet. The creative genius of the poet works, not as separate faculties, but as a unit; it does not divide itself into independent processes; it moves as a whole. Often, indeed, personalising involves the combining of images; for when the poet humanises things in a distinctive way, as in speaking of the ivy as "shuddering," he necessarily combines images at the same time; in this case, the image of "ivy" with the image of "shuddering." For the sake of clearness, however, critical analysis finds it necessary to make a logical distinction between these processes. Such an analysis does not, of course, actually separate the processes themselves; in the actual making of poetry the processes work together, with only varying degrees of emphasis, in an almost in-

separable way. The combining of images in the making of poetry is merely one phase of a total constructive activity.

Like personalising, too, the combining of images, as it appears in poetry, is simply a special form of an activity which men carry out every day of their lives. When the young child says, "Pretty," and touches a hot coal, the sting of pain he suffers is a sufficient stimulus for him to connect henceforth the images of "fire" and "burned finger"; if he could not hold these and like images in sustained connection he would be an idiot. So, later, some practical necessity—need of food or clothing, warding off enemies, or protection from the elements—compels man to rearrange his images of things with a view to more efficient action. What distinguishes man from the lower animals is his ability to adapt himself to his environment and in some degree to control it. The final secret of his success in doing this is his ability to use the mental image. Actually to effect a change in environment—to harness the waters for power and light, to bridle the horse and domesticate the cow—means first to imagine the change, to see images of the environment in the mind's eye rearranged and regrouped in some way promising satisfaction.

But man does not stop here. Having, in some degree, learned to adapt himself to his environment, and even to control it, he is still unsatisfied. Like the lower animals, man is pained with want, but, unlike them, he is not satisfied with fulness.

Things physical merely do not meet his wants. Animals are placid and self-contained; they appear to be quite contented. Man never is. He never quite reaches the goal of sweet content; he never quite grasps the Holy Grail of his desire. Always some barnacle of unsatisfaction, always some clog of discontent prevents his free course to happiness. And so he is for ever making some effort to modify his environment, to better it. He plans Utopias here on earth. Failing to realise these, he conceives of after-worlds, Heavens and Valhallas, where his happiness will be replete; his heaven is his "Vision of fulfill'd Desire." Under the sharp pinch of necessity, or "condemned to some nobility," spurred on by the ever elusive hope that he may find satisfaction and contentment, man is for ever grouping images of things he knows into new and ideal forms.

II.

The new and original combining of images in the making of poetry is but a special use of this general activity. Cast upon a plane which removes them from the purely physical level, the combinations of images in poetry differ from others only in novelty and in the distinctness of purpose which they serve; as combinations they come into being in precisely the same way as do other combinations of images. Poetry is not a mere excrescence upon life; it is not something made by a

peculiar people using unique processes; it is an extension upon life as we ordinarily know life. In the form of new combinations of images it represents both a felt need for some kind of ideal control, especially in feeling, thought, and conduct, and the attainment, or possibility of attainment, of such control. Poetry bears the same relation to life in general that an imagined bridge does to an unbridged stream. Out of the past it creates the future. It is a grouping of images which signifies some unattained desire or want in life and, more or less directly, the means of satisfying that desire or want. It is the bringing of images into certain organic relations not conceived by most men. "What confessedly constitutes the most valuable object of all writing, whether in prose or verse, . . ." says Wordsworth, is "to supply endless combinations of forms and imagery." Other poets express the same idea. The language of poets, Shelley tells us, is "vitally metaphorical; that is, it marks the before unapprehended relations of things and perpetuates their apprehension"; poetry "awakens and enlarges the mind itself by rendering it the receptacle of a thousand unapprehended combinations of thought."

Take a simple example. Keats, a boy of fifteen, was reading Spenser one day when he came upon the expression, "sea-shouldering whales." "What an image that is!" he cried, "'sea-shouldering whales!'" The phrase is a happy instance of the distinctive kind of combination of images often

effected in poetry and characteristic of it; and the young poet-reader's exclamation was an unmistakable sign that the combination was not commonplace but novel. Spenser took images of the several things here represented,—the sea, a shoulder, a whale, and combined them. Not that he did this consciously. Poets, as I have suggested, do not work in that way; they work, as a rule, by inspiration. The synthesis which they effect is not thought out; it comes, seemingly, of its own accord. Yet however unconscious, however inevitable the phrase may seem to be, it is still made up of images of things which at some time in the life of the poet lay independent and unconnected; it represents a new and original grouping or combination of images.

The reader follows the poet. For him, too, the phrase represents a new combination of images. Keats, no doubt, had looked upon the sea, he knew what a shoulder is, he had perhaps seen a whale. And he had images of these things floating about, as it were, in his mind. But he had never brought them into connection; he had never before had occasion to group, combine, or unify them in just this way. As he read Spenser's phrase, however, they leaped together; they combined and flashed with a light of new significance which flooded the mind of the young reader and made him cry out with joy. Alike for poet and for reader the distinctive thing in this, as in other similar expressions, is the combining of images.

III.

The most evident form that the combining of images in poetry assumes appears in phrase and line. In the following phrases the combining of images is new and original: "*death's dateless night*"; "*the swiftest wing of recompense is slow*"; "*the hour steals on*"; "*guilty doors*"; "*leaden messengers*"; "*liquid prisoner*"; "*wisdom and fortune combating together*"; "*carry-tale, dissenting Jealousy*"; "*sick-thoughted Venus*"; "*grim-grinning ghost*"; "*There's daggers in men's smiles*"; "*darkness does the face of earth entomb*" (Shakespeare); "*the narrow house o' death*"; "*minutes wing'd their way*"; "*pleasures are like poppies spread*"; "*clouds swift-winged*"; "*death's untimely frost*"; "*the rank is but the guinea stamp*"; "*winged day*"; "*life's last ebbing sands*"; "*the careless wind*"; "*patriotic tide*" (Burns); "*ripe progress*"; "*unfooted sea*"; "*dewy rhyme*"; "*rugged hours and fruitless toil*"; "*dismal forest-hearse*"; "*kernel of the grave*"; "*embalmed darkness*"; "*dying rolls of abrupt thunder*"; "*the pebbled shore of memory*"; "*bubbling springs of talk*" (Keats); "*the air of summer*"; "*ripen'd joy of womanhood*"; "*long-nursed inclination*"; "*brooding years*"; "*bitter hug of mortality*" (Whitman). Between phrase and line there is, of course, no essential difference so far as the combining of images is concerned. We may see new and original combination in such lines as:

"Than unswept stone, besmear'd with sluttish time."

"She stood in tears amid the alien corn."

"Life, like a dome of many-coloured glass,
Stains the white radiance of Eternity,
Until Death tramples it to fragments."

"The white kine glimmer'd, and the trees
Laid their dark arms about the field."

"So shalt thou feed on Death, that feeds on men,
And Death once dead, there 's no more dying then."

Combination appears, too, in the larger wholes—stanza and poem, scene and play. Adequate illustration is here impossible, but I may suggest what is done by taking a poem which, as we have seen, reveals also the process of personalising—Wordsworth's *Ode to Duty*. The original and distinctive combination effected in each stanza may be indicated, though phrased in ideas somewhat baldly and abstractly, in this way: (1) Duty as the daughter of the Voice of God; (2) Unconscious rectitude and duty; (3) Love and duty; (4) Self-confidence and self-will and duty (contrast); (5) Repose or peace of mind and duty; (6) True goodness and beauty; (7) Strength and freedom and slavery to duty. Each stanza represents a distinct unit of combination. Through the grouping of minor images in phrase and line, a combination of more important elements is effected in each stanza.

Just as the grouping of images in the several phrases and lines of this poem goes to make up the unit for each stanza, so the new and original combination of the several stanzas goes to make up the new and original unit represented by the poem as a whole. This final unit may, in this case, be reduced to the statement: *slavery to duty is true freedom*. Here is the centre about which every minor combination in phrase, line, and stanza gathers, and to which they all contribute. To most men, duty means lack of freedom, limitation, irritating and irksome restriction; images of liberty, freedom, enjoyment, and pleasure—these and images of duty do not go together; in the nature of things they seem to be opposed. The poet's aim is to effect a new and original combination in the minds of men. And so, first of all, he translates his conception of duty into terms of our experience. "Do you know," he asks, "what it is to be guided by a light at night when you are seeking home and rest? Then you know something of what I mean by duty. Have you ever been checked and reproved by the rod? If so, you know something more of my conception of duty. Have you known victory and law in times of terror? That is something which duty, as I know it, affords." Through these minor combinations of images which the poet enables us to make, he leads us to other combinations such as those of love and duty, of goodness and duty, which are effected by the separate stanzas. And through

the groupings effected by the stanzas we are led, even with joyous conviction, to combine images of slavery with others of duty and of true freedom; we finally effect a combination which reveals or suggests the central idea of the poem as a whole. What is true of this poem is in general true of all poetry, if we read it aright; it is true of the primitive man's poetry, of the poetry of children, of the *Divine Comedy*, of *Paradise Lost*, of *Othello*. Sometimes the result of the combination is a great thought, broadly intimated or more directly expressed; sometimes it is an emotion; but, regarded from our present point of view, each poem or play represents the new and original combination of significant images.

IV.

From such an examination as I have just made, it might naturally be thought that the only images involved in the making of a poem are those represented by the language of the poem itself. It is far from being so, however. The images which are directly represented by the words of a poem are indeed but a small part of all that go to make the poem what it is. This fact is due to the interesting circumstance that all images have what one writer calls a fringe, and another calls clothes. By fringe or clothes is meant the group of images which gather about any central image. As I write, I hear the call of the cardinal; and as I

pause there comes before my mind's eye an image of the cardinal himself: I see his brilliant red, the tuft upon his head, his swift flight; I recall a line of poetry read a few days ago, "Keen as an arrow flies the water-king," for the phrase "keen as an arrow" seems very aptly to describe the cardinal's flight also; I get, too, the vague image of some one whom I am pleased to fancy the cardinal always seeks when he calls: "Theodore! Theodore!" Then I see, in imagination, the woods—trees and flowers—breaking into life, for it is springtime; I see and hear other birds; I catch glimpses of fleecy clouds and bright sunshine; I recall many of the pleasures and joys of spring. So I could go on indefinitely. These images of things which I thus call up, or which seem rather to come of their own accord, are the fringe or clothes for the central image of the cardinal.

In the making of a poem the flow of images that flood the mind of the poet is probably beyond our faintest conception. Wordsworth tells us that a half hour's roam through "imperial bowers" would leave behind a dance of images for weeks; images came "uncalled for and rising up like exhalations." Fine thoughts came to Goethe, he said, "like free children of God and cried, 'Here we are.'" Thoughts came crowding in so fast upon Dryden's mind that his only difficulty was to choose and reject. And Shelley tells us that "the most glorious poetry that has ever been communicated to the world is probably a feeble shadow of

the original conceptions of the poet." Any one who reads his *Skylark* must realise this. The image of the skylark itself is a mere centre about which other images grouped themselves, probably with extreme rapidity. The skylark is "like a poet hidden in the light of thought"; it is "like a high-born maiden in a palace tower"; it is "like a glow-worm golden in a dell of dew"; it is "like a rose embowered in its own green leaves." Images, we may believe, fairly stormed upon the poet's mind as he listened enraptured by the bird's song. But he names only four; and he does so because, as Wordsworth says, "after a certain time, we must either select one image or object, which must put out of view the rest wholly, or must subordinate them to itself while it stands forth as a head." What we call the poem may contain but a half score of images, but before the poet's eyes the Muse will have brought all heaven, and dissolved him into ecstasies. The poem represents, as Elizabeth Barrett pointed out, "the difference between the thing desired and the thing attained, between the idea in the writer's mind and the *εἰδωλον* cast off in his work."

V.

It is the fringe or clothes, the secondary or associated images, that are of chief value in the making of a poem. Here the peculiar touch of genius is best revealed. For those images which

are directly represented on the printed page are, or should be, selected by the poet with an intuition of what, in general, they will arouse. The value of the original combinations lies not so much in themselves as in what they suggest; they should be inexhaustibly suggestive. The flash of discovery which comes from the combination of images made by the poet awakens whole vistas of "secondary stories," as Stevenson calls them; and it is these secondary stories that make the poem, as art, contemplative, as we say. The central images merely strike certain notes, and these echo endlessly throughout the known and unexplored recesses of the mind.

The truth of this fact is revealed in various ways. To illustrate it, I shall consider a line in Wordsworth's *Michael* which at first appears to effect no distinctive combination of images whatever.

Near the close of the poem, it will be remembered, the poet tells how Michael, after the downfall of his son Luke, often went to the sheepfold, their covenant of faith,

."And never lifted up a single stone."

Matthew Arnold praised this line. It is, he says, "of the highest and most truly expressive kind." Its poetic power and effectiveness are, indeed, at once felt by any one who reads the poem. What is the secret of its magic? As Arnold observes, "there is nothing subtle in it, no heightening, no

study of poetic style, strictly so called, at all." Regarded by itself, the line appears almost bald; it is commonplace. Of a lazy workman one might say: "I watched him for half an hour, and he never lifted up a single stone." But now the poetry has fled. Why? Whence the difference? Taken out of its setting, the line is flat prose. But *in* its setting, it becomes ultimate poetry. And it does so, from the point of view of the combining of images, because the central image which Wordsworth has given us in this line is the most effective combining centre that there is in the entire poem. The power of the line does not lie in itself, but in the images which it groups about it. Let us not think for a moment that the poet did not in imagination see old Michael's haggard face, with its care-sunk lines and dulled eye, his stooped shoulders, his relaxed frame (the line clearly suggests that), and his slow step; or that he did not enter sympathetically into the sorrows of Michael's heart and feel the piercing pathos of his life. All this and more, no doubt, the poet saw and felt; this was his poem; and the inferior artist would have given us all these details. But Wordsworth has the wisdom of genius. He knew that to give these details would be to defeat his own ends. It would be doing for the reader what it is the reader's chief joy to do for himself. And so the poet selects but a single image of an inert old man, knowing that this single image will act like a lodestone and draw unto it all associated images, whether they have

been suggested by the poem itself or belong to the reader's own experience. The line thus becomes the centre for the endless grouping and combining of images which lie outside the line itself; endless, because the more one knows of life, of struggle and effort, of stinging disappointment and crushing sorrow, of a child-changed father, the more will one continually bring to this line, will he see and find. In comparison with other lines in the poem, this line may itself effect no striking combination of images; but in its suggested or associated imagery it is inexhaustible.

Or take the lines from *Hamlet*:

"If thou didst ever hold me in thy heart,
Absent thee from felicity awhile,
And in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain,
To tell my story."

There is relatively more poetry, more of a "heightening" and poetic style, in these lines than there is in the line, "And never lifted up a single stone." The expressions, "hold me in thy heart," "absent thee from felicity," "harsh world," "draw thy breath in pain," are all novel combinations. But I doubt if, in themselves, they are sufficient to make the passage, independently regarded and taken out of its setting, a great one. Yet to Arnold these lines were a touchstone of all that is excellent in poetry. But here again, quite evidently, what is in the lines themselves is much less than what they suggest; the central images are

practically lost in the wealth of images which they arouse. Taken out of their setting and read by one not familiar with the play, the lines might be faintly pleasing but little more. Read in their setting, however, and supported by the wide range of images connected with Hamlet's pathetic career, how different they become! Every word grows rich with suggestion; it takes on fresh meaning and value; it acts as the dynamic centre of a whole group of images. All that Horatio had ever been to Hamlet—and at the last he struggled to die with him—is gathered together by the line, "If thou didst ever hold me in thy heart"; "felicity,"—what may it mean? only those who know Hamlet's inmost heart can tell; "harsh world"—as one comes upon the phrase one recalls the world of truth and beauty which for Hamlet had become false and ugly, and he reviews once more the unparalleled misfortunes which had made it so; "draw thy breath in pain"—this Hamlet had done from the moment he received the news of his beloved father's cruel death; and in "my story" Hamlet's whole pathetic career is compressed into two words. Arnold was surely right in regarding these lines as a touchstone of poetry. They are. But the secret of their greatness does not lie chiefly in the lines themselves. It lies rather in the fact that they are the vital centre for the endless grouping, in a manner intense, vivid, and concentrated, of all the images of Hamlet which have been aroused in the reader's mind through the

closest and most careful study of the play. Just as Michael's life, with all its joys and all its sorrows, culminates in the line, "And never lifted up a single stone," so Hamlet's life, with its greater possibilities, its more intense joys and sharper sorrows, culminates in these lines.⁷

In both these passages the combination of images that is of chief value takes place among the associated images. The oftener one reads, the more he thinks he finds. But what he finds is not merely what the poet gives him. He brings it himself. He finds at first only what he brings; then, with the poet's aid, he adds to what he finds. There could, obviously, be no associated images unless there were central images; yet it is the associated images, the clothes or fringe of the central images, that are of chief consequence in the making of poetry. "That only," says Lessing, speaking of painting, "is a happy choice which allows the imagination free scope. The longer we gaze, the more must our imagination add; and the more our imagination adds, the more we must believe we see." The same is true of poetry.

VI.

The grouping of images, both in the poet's original combination and in the fringe or clothes of the central images, is not merely fortuitous; as we shall presently see, it is not controlled primarily even by the will of the poet; it takes place

according to laws. There are laws of suggestion which control the appearance of images in the mind of poet and of reader; and there are laws of Nature and of personality to which all combinations of images in poetry, effected through the laws of suggestion, must conform.

The first of the laws of suggestion through which images in poetry are grouped is contiguity. The rule here is: images tend to suggest one another in the same time-order in which their corresponding objects have been experienced. Suppose that I have seen a boy climb a tree to rob a bird's nest. The mother bird appears and attacks him. In his excitement, the boy falls to the ground. When I come to tell the story to a friend the images that I call up tend to follow each other in a corresponding order. Each image tends to suggest another in the order of the original experience. It is this same law that frequently governs the grouping or combining of images in poetry. When Scott writes:

“He chased a stalwart stag in vain,
Outstripp'd his comrades, miss'd the deer,
Lost his good steed, and wander'd here,”

he groups images which have suggested one another, according to contiguity, in the same order as presumably the original experience took place. Iago does the same kind of thing in *Othello*:

“ . . . Thus it is, general.

Montano and myself being in speech,
There comes a fellow crying out for help,
And Cassio following him with determined sword,
To execute upon him. Sir, this gentleman
Steps in to Cassio and entreats his pause:
Myself the crying fellow did pursue,
Lest by his clamour—as it so fell out—
The town might fall in fright: he, swift of foot,
Outran my purpose; and I return'd the rather
For that I heard the clink and fall of swords,
And Cassio high in oath; which till to-night
I ne'er might say before. When I came back—
For this was brief—I found them close together,
At blow and thrust; even as again they were
When you yourself did part them.”

Here is a rapid grouping of images in the same order as the incidents which they represent are supposed to have taken place. It is clearly a case of grouping by contiguity, the images tending to suggest one another in the same time-order as the incidents themselves. Primitive poetry, the poetry of children, simple narrative like *The Lady of the Lake* or *Evangeline*, *The Canterbury Tales*, poems of memory and reminiscence, epic poems, all group their images primarily according to the law of contiguity. In such cases, images are grouped, not because of some inherent similarity, but because the original experiences were either simultaneous or in close succession. It is because of the operation of this law that we get the sense of *flow* in narrative and epic poetry.

The second of the laws of suggestion is similarity. Like suggests like in consciousness: there is a reciprocal suggestion of like things; there is an attraction of similars. This is the invariable rule. On calling up an image of Chaucer's "Persoun of a Toun," I find that I soon have before my mind's eye an image of a corresponding figure described by Goldsmith. Separated by centuries as bits of character-drawing, they yet stand side by side in my mind because they are similar: like suggests like. This law of similarity is the secret of all significant combination, whether in science or in art. All that Darwin did, finally, was to point out the similarity among a wide range of objects in nature where no similarity had been discerned or perhaps even suspected. What Shakespeare did in his greatest plays was to bring similar yet sharply differentiated characters into organic relation.

In poetry, the combining of images according to the law of similarity is most immediately and evidently revealed through the simple simile and metaphor. When Salisbury says of Richard II:

"Ah, Richard! with the eyes of heavy mind
I see *thy glory like a shooting star*
Fall to the base earth from the firmament,"

he brings images together on a basis of similarity. When the Bastard in *King John* says:

"Ha, majesty! how high *thy glory towers*,
When the rich blood of kings is set on fire!"

images are again grouped on a basis of similarity. In the one case the similarity is openly expressed, and we have a simile; in the other it is assumed, the likeness of one thing being read directly into the other, and we have a metaphor. In both cases the grouping is the result of suggestion by similarity. Like has suggested like. The poet has merely revealed the likeness in different ways.

The most effective as well as the most comprehensive form in poetry of grouping images by similarity is contrast. Contrast is not an independent principle. It is likeness with a difference; it is dissimilarity in the midst of likeness. In contrast, the attention is centred on the difference, not on the likeness; but the likeness must be there. The most impressive experiences that we ever have, those that strike deepest down into life, those in which we feel the sharpest pathos, the most striking incongruity, the noblest sublimity, are those in which the elements combined involve *a maximum of difference on a basis of similarity*. The line cited from *Michael* and the passage from *Hamlet* are illustrative. Each involves contrast. In each there appears a maximum of difference on a basis of similarity. The Michael whom we know at the close of the poem is the *same* Michael whom we knew at the beginning of the poem. But what a difference has been wrought! What a contrast there is! So, too, with Hamlet. The Hamlet who speaks those lines near the close of the play is the same noble youth who spoke in the

early part of the play. But again what a contrast! It carries us to the height of pathos that Shakespeare here wishes us to attain. In *Macbeth* Shakespeare made his contrast between the murder-scene and the porter-scene so sharp-drawn that for years many critics failed to see the connecting thread of similarity, and thought the latter scene spurious. In the same play, Banquo is a dramatic foil, an artistic contrast, to Macbeth. In *Julius Cæsar* Brutus, the man of formal idealism, is a contrast to Cæsar, the man of practical affairs. Contrast, indeed, is very widely used in poetry. The primitive man's song of grief, the child's *Cock Robin*, *The Faery Queene*, *Lycidas*, Gray's *Elegy*, *The Deserted Village*, Byron's *Stanzas for Music*, *Adonais*, many of the poems in *In Memoriam*,—these and scores of other poems depend, for their most significant combination of images, upon contrast.

Contrast, as I have said, is not an independent principle: it rests upon similarity. Without similarity there could be no contrast. Yet contrast, in all its most effective forms, does not depend for its value upon an *awareness* of the similarity involved. In the case of the simple simile and metaphor, examples of which have just been given, there is little doubt that both poet and reader are aware of the similarity between the images grouped together. But in the case of the line from *Michael* or the lines from *Hamlet*, we are not immediately aware of the similarity, the features

of correspondence, between the earlier and the later situations; we are absorbed in the contrast. That it is the contrast in which we are absorbed, that we are not directly aware of the underlying similarity upon which the contrast rests and through which alone it takes on meaning, is merely a further evidence of the skill of the poet in combining images by similarity.

The extensive use of contrast as a means of combining images is vindicated by its effect upon feeling. It intensifies feeling. It is one of the most effective means of impressing consciousness. Through the juxtaposition of images different, yet in some measure similar, attention is quickened and feeling deeply stirred. The piercing pathos of the latter part of *Michael* or of the closing scenes of *Othello*, rising almost to the point of actual pain, is effected chiefly through contrast with the earlier and happier situations. Through contrast, we gain more vivid impressions. The heightened interest aroused through the dissimilar situations serves finally to cement the seemingly opposed elements closer together and to add to their suggestive and emotional force. Contrast, as an aspect of similarity, is so widely used in combining images in poetry because it is one of the most effective means that the poet can command for stirring, deepening, and intensifying feeling.

These two laws, similarity and contiguity, are of course not independent, and are not separately employed. In his little poem *Fidelity*, Words-

worth enables us, first of all, to call up images of things in succession,—the shepherd hears a dog bark; he sees the dog moving in the thicket; he makes his way toward the dog; he finds a human skeleton. Here we evidently have the grouping of images according to contiguity, according to the time-order in which these incidents actually occurred. But the centre of the poem, the true basis of its effectiveness, lies, not in the mere grouping in succession of these and other images, but, as the title indicates, in the implied contrast between the earlier and the present situation. The dog is the *same* dog that had followed his master until his master fell from the cliff. He

“ . . . had been through three months' space
A dweller in that savage place.”

Through contrast, through marking sharply the difference between the present and the former situation, Wordsworth intimates to us very effectively what the fidelity of this dumb brute had been. In this case, the grouping by contiguity has involved contrast: the principles are really not independent. If, we may say, contiguity gives us what we feel to be the *flow* of images in poetry, similarity gives us a *progressive complexity*. There is and can be no great poetry, just as there can be no true science, where images are not grouped on the basis of some fundamental similarity.

VII.

The poet regroups and combines images in order to build up an imaginary world that shall, in some way, be more deeply satisfying than the present one. Out of images representing things and persons of real life he creates a world that is ideal. But in doing so, he is under the constant and pressing necessity of so grouping his images as to conform to the laws of real life; only in this way can he hope to suggest a rational basis for realising whatever ideals he has embodied in his poetry. Apart from the special laws which affect the actual grouping of images, similarity and contiguity, there are, accordingly, laws of Nature and of personality to be observed by the poet. Tennyson writes:

“Break, thou deep vase of chilling tears,
That grief hath shaken into frost!”

In the novel combination of images which Tennyson effects in these lines, a combination based upon similarity, he implies, and conforms to, a natural law also. If kept perfectly still, water may be cooled below the freezing point; but if it is disturbed, it congeals at once into ice. This is a law of Nature. Wordsworth writes:

“Ethereal minstrel! pilgrim of the sky!
Dost thou despise the earth where cares abound?
Or, while the wings aspire, are heart and eye
Both with thy nest upon the dewy ground?”

Thy nest which thou canst drop into at will,
Those quivering wings composed, that music still!

“To the last point of vision, and beyond
Mount, daring warbler!”

Here, too, the grouping of images is such as correctly and truly to represent the habits of the lark as a thing of Nature. For the lark does build its nest upon the ground; it does sing while on the wing; and it does soar out of the range of human vision, still singing.

Laws of personality have also to be observed. Not only in his representation of the interplay of character in the uniform effects of jealousy, of suspicion, of o'erweening ambition, of kindness, of magnanimity, but also in what he directly says, the poet must conform, in his grouping of images, to laws of personality. When Dante says:

“Light have ye still to follow evil or good,
And of the will free power, which, if it stand
Firm and unwearied in Heav'n's first assay,
Conquers at last, so it be cherish'd well,
Triumphant over all”;

and when Shakespeare writes:

“Our rasher faults
Make trivial price of serious things we have,
Not knowing them until we know their grave;
Oft our displeasures, to ourselves unjust,
Destroy our friends and after weep their dust;

Our own love waking cries to see what 's done,
While shameful hate sleeps out the afternoon "

the grouping of images involves laws of the mind. Human nature works in just this way. The truth of what the poets here express is confirmed by psychological analysis. What we find illustrated in these lines we shall find on all the tablelands of poetry. Everywhere, in varying degrees of truth, the combinations of images involve, imply, or ultimately refer to, the laws of Nature and of mind.

Because, finally, the theme of poetry is man and the happiness of man, the laws of mind are the more important. What we find in poetry representing Nature refers, as in Wordsworth, in the last analysis, to the life of man. Wordsworth deals with Nature; Tennyson does so too, in large measure; and both represent her truly, according to her laws; but the conformity of each poet to the laws of Nature finds its ultimate justification in man and in the life of man. Shakespeare has powerfully disclosed the laws of mind or personality; he is true to human nature; but in all his representations of life he has consistently subordinated the laws of Nature to the laws of mind. Whatever the dominant interest, whatever the conscious or unconscious aim of the poet, this subordination of Nature to the laws of the mind is consistently followed. Nowhere, of course, is the distinction sharp-drawn; nowhere, just because things in Nature do meet their final explanation in the life of

man, is the separation complete. Nor does the poet, we may believe, ever dream of laws; he is not directly conscious of them, does not think of them; yet they are involved; they permeate his work, governing alike his finest product and condemning his vain effort when he fails to make a truthful representation of Nature or of man.

VIII.

The touchstone of these, as of all laws, is universal truth. The new and original combinations of poetry, though they deal with concrete and particular images, have it as their end to reveal, in its emotional setting, the general truth which underlies each image and each grouping. In each thing that we ever come to know—stone, flower, tree, cloud, animal, man himself—there is an inner centre of truth not seen or apprehended by the casual observer; there are, in very truth, sermons in stones, books in the running brooks; there is something good in everything, if we can find it there. But, day upon day, we fail. Then comes the poet to our aid. He points out, reveals, unfolds the inner truth that seems to be so secretly bestowed in things and in the life of man; he does not point out merely the external appearance of things; he portrays their inner life. When he looks upon a piece of landscape he disregards accidental, particular, or temporary conditions such as weather and crops and possible railroads;

he seeks to reveal, as Wordsworth does in *Tintern Abbey*, the basis for moral being or the joy ineffable stored up there, not for himself alone, but for all men. He finds

“A motion and a spirit, that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things . . .
The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse,
The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul
Of all my moral being.”

He does not seek to give a photographic picture of things in Nature; he selects and intensifies, he groups and modifies, the images that come before his mind, all with a view to unfolding the universal and potential truth which they contain. A mouse, a daisy, a skylark or a green linnet, the sun and the moon, a star, the ocean, a chambered nautilus, each may be said to contain some inner truth of life that the poet seeks to unfold. In his portrayal of the inner life of man, the poet seeks the same end. He aims to reveal universal truth. Taking his individual experiences, actually encountered or imaginatively conceived, he elevates them to the plane of world truths; he universalises them. Tennyson, in *In Memoriam*, takes the particular fact that his friend Hallam died, and that he grieved for him, and he exalts it into a world-truth; he universalises it. He does not merely tell us about his personal grief; he reveals what we might

call the higher laws of personality in a state of grief. To quote Tennyson's own words:

"*In Memoriam* is rather the cry of the whole human race than mine. In the poem altogether private grief swells out into thought of, and hope for, the whole world. It begins with a funeral and ends with a marriage—begins with death and ends in promise of a new life—a sort of Divine Comedy, cheerful at the close. It is a very impersonal poem as well as personal."

Poetry, then, whether it deals with things in Nature or with character, makes its groupings with reference to universal laws; it deals with the universal element in Nature and in life. There are fixed and unalterable laws of personality just as there are fixed and unalterable laws of the physical world, and it is in consistency only with both that any worthy ideals can be realised. Combinations of images which imply such ideals must conform to these laws. The laws need not, indeed should not, obtrude; they need never be stated; in the highest poetry they never are; they are merely implied; yet without them the poetry itself could not be. "The aim of poetry is to represent the universal through the particular, to give a concrete and living embodiment of a universal truth. The universal of poetry is not an abstract idea; it is particularised to sense, it comes before the mind clothed in the form of the concrete, presented under the appearance of a living organ-

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ism whose parts are in vital and structural relation to the whole."

IX.

If the grouping of images effected by the poet takes place according to laws, and if, in his representation of his ideal world, he must still conform to laws of Nature and of personality, how does he achieve what he does? What is the secret of the poet's originality?

Possible misapprehensions may here be anticipated. The poet is called a maker; he is said to create. And in one sense he does. He groups images of known things into new and original forms; and these forms reveal truth. But this truth the poet merely discovers; he does not make it. When Tennyson says:

"Self-reverence, self-knowledge, self-control,
These three alone lead life to sovereign power"

he makes a new combination; but he does not create the truth contained in it. So when Shakespeare has Menecrates say:

"We, ignorant of ourselves,
Beg often our own harms, which the wise powers
Deny us for our good,"

he merely reveals what he has found to be true in life; he does not create the truth. Each poet is really an explorer in the realms of thought and

feeling, not a creator. The truth is fixed by some power other than himself, other, indeed, than man. By some happy inspiration or insight the poet comes upon new combinations representing new truths, only to realise that all he finds has long since been familiar knowledge to the gods. What the poet finds is new to him and new to other men; but what he is commonly said to create in making his new combinations he no more really creates than the scientist creates the physical laws of which he is the original discoverer.

Nor can the poet force himself into discovery by his own will. Conscious effort to make new combinations of images seems useless. "The worst is," says Goethe, "that no thinking will bring such thoughts; we must be made right by nature." And Shelley says: "A man cannot say, 'I will compose poetry.' The greatest poet even cannot say it; for . . . poetry . . . differs in this respect from logic, that it is not subject to the control of the active powers of the mind, and that its birth and recurrence have no necessary connection with the consciousness or will."

The final secret of originality in poetry, as in everything else, is feeling. Not by intellectual force alone, not by will, but through feeling, through an emotional self-projection into the life of men and of things, through personalising, does the poet catch the secret of original and significant combinations of images. The power to create poetry cannot be commanded; it is elusive and

comes unsought from within. To seek it is to miss it. The poet must become as a little child, and follow the gently whispered suggestions of a spirit which seems not to be his own. He must follow, as Ferdinand followed Ariel, knowing not whither or why. "I have sung of that which I have never known," says one poet; others have felt that a spirit breathed the words and guided the pen as they wrote.

X.

As a central process in the making of poetry, the combining of images manifests itself with almost infinite variety. The chief aspects have already been set forth, but there are still a few matters of consequence which may be suggested. (1) Poets make combinations which transcend the laws of the external world as we know it. Milton does it in *Paradise Lost*, introducing God, angels, and demons; Shakespeare does it in *The Tempest*, introducing Ariel and Caliban. Both introduce supernatural or unnatural beings. But this transcending of the physical world is, in the one case, in order to reveal the laws of the interplay of the forces of good and evil, and, in the other, to present refinements of character, and to lend delicacy and charm of atmosphere that could, presumably, have been attained so effectively in no other way. What is aimed at by the poet is an inner consistency, a unity of parts which, whatever

may be the accidents of their external reality, combine to reveal in its emotional setting some underlying idea or truth. What is of consequence is this higher truth, not the mere fidelity to more or less accidental facts. The truth of poetry is "essentially different from the truth of fact. Things that are outside and beyond the range of our experience, that never have happened and never will happen, may be more true, poetically speaking, more profoundly true than those daily occurrences which we can with confidence predict." (2) In the combining of images contradictions of laws are more readily admitted in the world of Nature than in the sphere of personality. *The Rape of the Lock* is a fanciful poem; it contradicts the real world as we know it every day. Yet the motives of all the characters are reasonable and true. We at once resent any portrayal of character, no matter how extreme or fanciful the external action, where the action itself is motiveless or is motivated in an incorrect or absurd way. "We can sooner acquiesce in the altered facts of physical nature, than in the violation of the laws which lie at the root of conduct." (3) In close connection with this fact is another perhaps not commonly observed. This is the fact that all fanciful combinations, all those which do contradict reality as we know it, are recognised as fanciful only in the light of the law or principle which they contradict. *The Midsummer Night's Dream* is a play of fanciful combinations. But to see these combinations as

fanciful, to realise that they are impossible in the world of reality, one must perceive what laws of life are contradicted. Much of the pleasure of the reader or spectator depends, indeed, upon his discerning what is implied. Fanciful, exaggerated, and extreme combinations in poetry are often but indirect and subtle means of emphasising recognised laws of Nature and of personality. (4) In consequence of combining, the adjective and the verb become, from the point of view of language, the important parts of speech in poetry. Both express attributes or qualities of things; both represent a combining of something with something else. In the case of the adjective, as when the poet speaks of "shuddering ivy," the shuddering is assumed as an attribute of the ivy. In the case of the verb, as when the poet says the "hour steals," the stealing is declared to be an attribute of the hour; one assumes, implies, or takes for granted the connection between "shuddering" and "ivy"; the other explicitly states the connection between "hour" and "stealing." In all poetry, the adjective and verb, as expressing attributes or qualities of things, are of special consequence, and this is because the combining of images is a central process in the making of poetry. (5) Finally, the measure of all difference in the combinations of images in poetry is truth. Saying this I am, of course, only rephrasing what I have already said. But to face a truth about is often to see it more clearly. Poets have a common aim: grouping images according

to the laws of similarity and contiguity, they seek to present the particular in the light of the universal, to deal with things in life according to the permanent laws of nature and of personality. But they meet with only relative degrees of success. Some poets incorporate more truth than others do. Both Shakespeare and Chaucer deal chiefly with man. But one plumbs deep into life; he fathoms its greatest depth; the other sails gracefully on its surface, dipping lightly here and there. In the last analysis, the measure of worth of the combining of images lies, as I have said, in the manner of arranging the images, for it is through the arrangement of images that universal truth, of which poetry is the bearer, is finally revealed.

CHAPTER V

The Making of Poetry: Versifying

Verse being in itself sweet and orderly, and being best for memory, the only handle of knowledge, it must be in jest that any man can speak against it.—SIDNEY.

CHAPTER V

THE MAKING OF POETRY: VERSIFYING

I.

THE third and last distinct process involved in the making of poetry is versifying. This process, as I have said, does not stand precisely on a level with personalising and the combining of images. Versifying has directly to do with language, and language is an external element. Personalising and combining have to do with the mental image, and the mental image belongs to the mind. Moreover, what we call verse seems not to be so invariable and absolute a requirement of poetry as are the other processes. Yet, in spite of these restrictions, versifying, as I shall hope to show, is an essential process in the making of poetry.

One rather important qualification I wish to make, however. Versifying, as the term implies, is a process. But, in discussing it, I shall consider the *effect* of the process rather than the process itself. Precisely what the process is, just how verse is made, would probably be impossible to determine; and even if we could make the neces-

sary analysis, we should still have to determine whether such analysis actually revealed the value of versifying in the making of poetry.

Something should also be said, at this point, of the unusual difficulty of the problem that faces us. With regard to verse, differences of opinion are rife; extremes of situation are rampant. Metrists are not agreed even as to what verse is; and the term poetry is now made to include everything from a "prose poem" to mere versified language devoid of meaning. It is not my object to attempt to resolve all these difficulties nor to reduce all extremes of situation. We seek to know what the effect of versifying in the making of poetry is. To this end I shall discuss: (1) verse as essential to poetry; (2) the central effect of versifying; and (3) the music of verse.

II.

Our first question concerns the uniformity with which versifying is used in the making of poetry. The question is: Is versifying a necessary process in the making of poetry? In order to have poetry, must there be verse? The answer to this question must, it seems to me, be an affirmative, though a qualified affirmative. There is, it is true, a kind of composition, not in verse form, which is properly regarded as poetical. Composition of this kind we commonly call "prose poems." If we examine some of these prose poems we shall be in a better

position to perceive the conditions under which verse may be dispensed with.

If rhythm and harmony of language are carefully preserved, thoughts and feelings essentially poetical may, at times, be cast into prose form. They are so in the following passage:

“The eldest of the three is named *Mater Lachrymarum*, Our Lady of Tears. She it is that night and day raves and moans, calling for vanished faces. She stood in Rama, where a voice was heard of lamentation,—Rachel weeping for her children, and refusing to be comforted. She it was that stood in Bethlehem on the night when Herod’s sword swept its nurseries of Innocents, and the little feet were stiffened for ever which, heard at times as they trotted along floors overhead, woke pulses of love in household hearts that were not unmarked in heaven. Her eyes are sweet and subtle, wild and sleepy, by turns; oftentimes rising to the clouds, oftentimes challenging the heavens. She wears a diadem round her head. And I knew by childish memories that she could go abroad upon the winds, when she heard the sobbing of litanies, or the thundering of organs, and when she beheld the mustering of summer clouds.”

The rhetorical construction of this passage is perfect. Change a word, omit a phrase, invert a sentence, you mar the expression. Longinus found that, in a sentence from Demosthenes, to “take any word out of its own place, and transfer

it where you will . . . cut off one syllable only . . . its sheer sublimity is broken up and unstrung:" the whole expression rested upon "dactylic rhythms." Such prose borders on poetry and partakes of its essential nature. In the poetical passage quoted, the language falls into a kind of loose blank verse; the rhythm and harmony are in this way preserved.

When, in addition to the rhythm and harmony of the language, prose contains new and original combinations of images, it borders still more closely on the realm of poetry. Milton's ear, so sensitive to musical effects, and his vigorous imagination make him a master in this kind of poetical prose:

"I see in my mind a noble and puissant nation rousing herself like a strong man after sleep, and shaking her invincible locks: methinks I see her as an eagle mewing her mighty youth, and kindling her undazzled eyes at the full midday beam; purging and unscaling her long-abused sight at the fountain itself of heavenly radiance; while the whole noise of timorous and flocking birds, with those also that love the twilight, flutter about, amazed at what she means, and in their envious gabble would prognosticate a year of sects and schisms."

Milton's words not only ring a chime in one's ear; they arouse new and graphic images, carrying a wide suggestiveness that moves the mind to the same kind of activity as poetry itself.

Sometimes an author, even while he has regard

for the rhythm of his language, seeks primarily to mark a difference between emotions. The exalted emotion finds its expression in verse; the less exalted one in prose. Each is poetical; they differ only in degree. Whenever Hamlet gives expression to thoughts or feelings which directly concern himself, he uses verse, for his inner life is the centre of the play; when he speaks of something other than himself, when he turns away from his inner life, where the tragedy is taking place, to something in the objective world, he speaks in prose:

“This goodly frame, the earth, seems to me a sterile promontory; this most excellent canopy, the air, look you, this brave o’erhanging firmament, this majestical roof fretted with golden fire, why, it appears no other thing to me than a foul and pestilent congregation of vapours. What a piece of work is man! How noble in reason! How infinite in faculty! in form and moving, how express and admirable! in action how like an angel! in apprehension how like a god! the beauty of the world! the paragon of animals! And yet, to me, what is this quintessence of dust?”

Under other conditions these lines might well be in verse. No lack of poetical quality forced them into the mould of prose, for they are majestic in expression and noble in sentiment far beyond much good verse; but, relative to the highest in the play, they are subordinate, and Shakespeare’s unerring sense cast them into prose form.

In at least one instance, a poet's cosmic view of life has resulted in a departure from accepted verse-forms. Whitman writes a kind of half-prose verse. He throws loose his reins and gives his form free course. *Reconciliation* is evidence.

“Word over all, beautiful as the sky,
Beautiful that war and all its deeds of carnage
must in time be utterly lost,
That the hands of the sisters Death and Night incessantly softly wash again, and ever again,
this soil'd world;
For my enemy is dead, a man divine as myself is dead,
I look where he lies white-faced and still in the coffin—I draw near,
Bend down and touch lightly with my lips the white face in the coffin.”

Whitman's eye, indeed, “doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven”; his vista takes in the universe; his aims are large effects. And, in the matter of form, he does not offer “the old smooth prizes” but “rough new prizes.” Yet, as the third line alone would show, he is far from writing mere prose. The absence of conventional verse-form seems to be in harmony with the thought and feeling expressed, with the cosmic view, the exuberant hope, and the strong confidence of the man.

Each of the passages that I have quoted is poetic, though most of them are in prose; only

one seems, in any way, directly to recognise regular verse-form. Of poetry, regarded as an external thing, there is but one view consistently possible: to have poetry there must be verse. But the requirement is not borne out in fact: there is poetry in prose form. Moreover, not all poets endorse the requirement. Sidney, Shelley, and Wordsworth agree that verse is not always essential to poetry. "It is by no means essential," says Shelley, "that a poet should accommodate his language to this traditional form." The truth is that both prose and verse have rhythm: the rhythm of prose and the rhythm of verse are fundamentally the same thing. Rhythm is an inherent law of the universe, a law of economy of which the rhythm of language, whether in prose or verse, is but one manifestation. The rhythm of verse differs from the rhythm of prose only in that it is (1) measured according to some pattern or form; it is *standardised*; and (2) it is emotionally heightened and intensified. So arranged, the rhythm of verse is called metre. Occasionally writers of prose, the chief function of which is to express thought, deal with things poetically; they aim to give their subject some degree of emotional setting. Not wishing to adopt the form of poetry, and still seeking something of the effect produced by poetry, they make the rhythm of their prose approximate to the rhythm of verse.

Two conditions must, in such cases, invariably

be met, however. (1) The passage must be relatively short. Prose, like verse, keys up definite expectations of purpose and style; to have these expectations disappointed stirs resentment. The extended use of prose as a medium through which to produce essentially poetic effects is regarded as a subterfuge. A long poem, like *Paradise Lost*, written in prose would be a contradiction. (2) The prose must take on much of the rhythm and harmony of verse in order to be accepted at all. Herein lies the final bond of these prose-poems with poetry. Their form is that of irregular verse. Under certain conditions the irregularity is merely allowed for a short time, and the prose-poem thus comes, practically, under the requirement that verse is essential to poetry.

Verse itself, it need merely be mentioned, does not, of course, make poetry. From the lines:

"I put my hat upon my head
And walked into the Strand;
And there I met another man,
Whose hat was in his hand"

there is no poetic impression, though the lines themselves are in verse form. Of this supposed poem, one might say, with Coleridge: "To such specimens it would indeed be a fair and full reply, that these lines are not bad because they are unpoetic, but because they are empty of all sense and feeling." In comparison with such lines, the following prose passage from Wordsworth is

eminent poetry: "I am standing on the brink of that vast ocean I must sail so soon. I must speedily lose sight of the shore, and I could not once have conceived how little I am now troubled by the thought of how long or short a time they who remain on that shore may have a sight of me." Verse may be essential in the making of poetry, but mere verse-form can never make poetry what it is.

On this question, then, our conclusion seems clear. Versifying is, finally, an essential process in poetry. On occasion, where some degree of poetical effect is sought, typical verse-forms may be temporarily disregarded; under some circumstances prose may be used. But always, in such cases, the passage must be relatively short; and, what is even more important, the rhythm and the harmony which, as Shelley says, is "the spirit" of poetry must be preserved. Even in many cases where these conditions are met, the venture into the sphere of poetry succeeds, not by reason of the absence of a more evident verse-form, but in spite of the absence of it. But not at length. Prose aiming at poetical ends fails of effect after it passes a certain (rather ill-defined) limit. Wherever intense or sustained poetical effect is sought, versifying appears as an essential process in the making of poetry.

III.

Versifying, then, is an essential process in the making of poetry. The line between prose and

poetry cannot always be sharply drawn, but prose breaks down rather speedily as a carrying medium of poetical effect. Why is this? What distinctive effect is created by versifying that makes it essential for the production of all intense or sustained poetical effect? What independent function does versifying fulfil that is peculiar to that process? This is the second question which we have to consider.

Of the several qualities which make up verse, rhythm may, I suppose, safely be taken as the most fundamental and distinctive. "What does it all mean, poet?" Browning asks.

"Well,
Your brains beat into rhythm, you tell
What we have felt only, you expressed
You hold things beautiful the best
And place them in rhyme so, side by side."

According to the poet himself, the chief end of verse is to mould language into rhythmical form. And what is rhythm? Perhaps the simplest way to gain an accurate notion of it is to place one's finger on one's pulse. What will be found, of course, is that there are regular beats followed by pauses of definite intervals of time. Beat and pause make a unit; and to know what rhythm of pulse is one has only to think of the units thus formed as related and in succession. Rhythm, as one may come to know it through the pulse, and

rhythm in verse are essentially the same kind of thing. The rhythm of the lines:

“Tell me not, in mournful numbers,
Life is but an empty dream!
For the soul is dead that slumbers,
And things are not what they seem”

is almost identical with the rhythm of the pulse-beat. With but one or two exceptions, the syllables of these lines have the beat or stress followed by the pause or lack of stress, with precisely the same regularity as the pulse. The first line, for example, flows in a rhythm which may be indicated in this way: / x / x / x / x. Rhythm of pulse is the regular alternation of units made up of beat and pause; rhythm in verse is a measured or standardised arrangement of sound relations. The difference between rhythm of pulse and rhythm in verse is that the one is known through touch, the other through hearing; as rhythm, they are essentially the same kind of thing. Viewed generally and externally, then, verse is language that is beaten into measured rhythm, or that has some type of uniform or standard rhythmical arrangement.

The secret of verse, when it is regarded in this external way, ought presumably to be unfolded through a formal and systematic examination of it; the precise character and effect of verse ought, by this means, to become clear. The

examinations have been made; have they yielded the secret? We need not hesitate to reply. They have not. There is as yet no satisfactory science of verse. No formal analysis has yet shown conclusively what the distinctive function of verse is in the making of poetry.

Fully to vindicate these rather dogmatic statements here would carry us far afield; a suggestion or two must suffice. In the first place, to have a science of anything there must be some uniform kind of data. But what the data of a possible science of verse may be, what it is that is to be grouped and classified, no one, it seems, has been able to state conclusively. One writer maintains that "the sole rhythmic fact is the fluctuant relativity of long and short, or stress and slur"; he finds no feet in English verse; another just as positively assures us that the "foot" is the only unit of time on which all verse-rhythms are based. Nor does the confusion end here. It extends to the question of laws or principles in verse. This part of the problem may well be indicated by the following statement: "It cannot be too often repeated," says one writer, "that in prosody we start from no fixed rules. We start with a large body of practice, the work of our best poets. We examine this, trying to discover the principles on which they worked. That such principles exist, we are sure. No artistic work can be lawless; 'it is all triumphant art, but art in obedience to laws.' If we can discover and truly state

such principles, they may be fairly called laws of verse."

The statement is typical. The whole position of verse as a science is at once conceded. There are really no fixed rules in prosody, no laws; yet we must believe that they exist. No work of art is lawless; therefore, there must be laws underlying the making of verse. We must suppose that there is a science of verse possible, not because final laws have been formulated, but because something in the nature of art makes us feel that there are laws. I do not belittle the attempts to analyse verse-forms. We owe great debts to them. But at least let us acknowledge that they have not yet given us a science of verse. Lacking a science of verse we lack principles, and lacking principles we lack the explanation of what verse is. No attempt to formulate a science of verse has yet made evident what is the function of the process; it has not made clear what really is the end served by verse in the making of poetry.

IV.

We are thus brought to a position where we must consider verse from another point of view, namely, that of its inner effects. Why verse should be used at all in the making of poetry not even the most exact and exhaustive formal analysis has yet shown. What the function of verse is, we must endeavour to find out, therefore, in some

other way. Can we find out what this function is? I believe we can. We can at least determine, with reasonable certainty, why versifying as a process should be used in the making of poetry. To do this, however, we must consider verse, not as an external thing, but in the light of its inner effects.

Language in poetry, we have seen, represents mental images. Not every word in poetry has this as its immediate end; still, it is true that the language of poetry does, in the main, represent images. And the mark of the language of poetry, as that language is shaped by the poet, is rhythm. If these statements are true, the conclusion is one of simple logic: *the rhythm of language in poetry fulfils its function in some service which it renders to the mental image.* The question which follows is: "Can a rationale for the use of verse be found in the influence of rhythm upon the mental image?" Images are the raw material of poetry. Versifying is one of the processes in the making of poetry. Versifying is presumably, then, a method of dealing with or affecting the raw material. Is this so? Is there any chief effect produced upon images by versifying which can be satisfactorily attained in no other way? In the making of poetry, has the use of rhythm of language any direct and uniform value for images? I believe it has. But to see clearly what this value is we must glance back for a moment.

It will be remembered that, in speaking of the combining of images, I pointed out that the

combinations which at first take place are on what I called a physical plane. When the child touched the hot coal, he very soon brought into connection the images of hot coal and burned finger. And he kept them there. He did not allow these images to become separated; he did not touch a hot coal the second time. His action from that moment was more efficient. He got on better in the world than he did before. Nature, so to speak, had forced him to make a connection of images; and she insisted that, if he wished to avoid pain in this way, he should hold these images in a sustained connection. On the physical plane man is but a child. Some stress, some sharp necessity, some bitter constraint, some strong compulsion, is for ever forcing man to make new combinations of images. That he may escape pain, sickness, and death; that he may secure raiment and food; that he may ensure a measure of personal safety, man has been compelled by Nature to rearrange his images of things, and to hold those together which represent efficient action. The greater body of man's learning, the whole science of medicine, for example, has sprung more or less directly out of some kind of practical necessity. But, as we also saw, man has not stopped here. Unable even by his supremest efforts to match himself with Nature, unable to escape the suffering and death which she brings upon him, unable to snatch from her hand any perfect and lasting joy in life, man has found compensation

in his imagination; he has regrouped images in order to make ideal worlds. Of the ideal worlds he has made, some are moral, some æsthetic, some religious. He has built up a moral world in which duty is not bondage but true freedom; he has conceived of an æsthetic world where only beauty reigns; he has created a paradise where man is perfect, and perfect man is God.

Here we come upon a highly important fact: there is no immediate and sustained physical demand that the new combinations which man builds up in order to make these ideal worlds shall be held together. Indeed, regret it as we may, we know full well that these combinations are for ever breaking down. We never forget that fire burns or that hunger causes pain, but we lapse with surprising facility from the idea that slavery to duty is true freedom; we lose sight of our world of beauty; we forget our heaven beyond; we fail to keep our grasp upon our new combinations of images of this ideal sort. And we fail in large part because there is no immediate practical necessity which forces us to hold them together. Images representing our ideals do not compel; they invite. It may be, just as with fire and pain, that consequences serious and inevitable will follow if we do not hold together groupings of images which represent our ideals, but at least we do not feel these consequences so quickly or so sharply. In all the higher groupings of images, in all those represented by poetry in general, the

compelling power of the physical demand is not directly felt.

What is the consequence of this fact? What effect does it have upon the making of poetry? Poetry uses images. The combinations of them are new and original; they do not rest on the physical plane, and they differ from those made by most men. They are, consequently, hard to hold together. Combinations of images with which we are familiar are easily held together, easily retained; new combinations of images, those lacking the familiar note, are not easy to hold together. What is involved in this fact? What results from the truth that the new and original groupings of images which poetry effects are specially hard to hold in the relations in which the poet places them? It is this: without always being aware of the reasons involved, often led on merely by the sweetness of the music itself, often absorbed in the inherent delight which the melody and harmony of his rhythmic structure affords, the poet, at times consciously, but more often unconsciously, makes use of a process by which he moulds his language into organic units that have, as their final effect, the shaping into closer unity of the images which the language represents. This process is versifying.

V.

"We require," says Wordsworth, "every possible help and *attraction of sound*, in our language, to

smooth the way for the admission of things . . . *remote from our present concerns.*" The new and original groupings of images in poetry represent things "remote from our present concerns"; they do not rest on the physical plane on which we chiefly live; they do not represent what is mainly our daily concern; they are not easily built up in the mind and held together. Rhythm, as verse, is a possible help. Not only in metre, but in rime, in structure as a whole, rhythm is an "attraction of sound, in our language, to smooth the way for the admission" of not merely novel and striking diction but of new and original combinations of images.

Any well constructed poem will illustrate the truth of this statement. Let us take a poem that is limited in its form:

"When I have seen by Time's fell hand defaced
The rich proud cost of out-worn buried age;
When sometime lofty towers I see down-rased,
And brass eternal slave to mortal rage;
When I have seen the hungry ocean gain
Advantage on the kingdom of the shore,
And the firm soil win of the watery main,
Increasing store with loss, and loss with store;
When I have seen such interchange of state,
Or state itself confounded to decay;
Ruin hath taught me thus to ruminare,
That Time will come and take my Love away.

This thought is as a death, which cannot choose
But weep to have that which it fears to lose."

The combinations of images effected by the poet in this sonnet, such as "Time's fell hand," "out-worn buried age," "brass eternal slave to mortal rage," "hungry ocean," as well as the central combination effected in the sonnet as a whole, are all new and original. They have never been made by the average man; and, not having been used before, they are relatively hard to hold together. To mould language into a kind of inevitable, measured rhythm, harmony and melody is to bind the language more closely together, for these are really forms of word-association by sound. And to bind the language more closely together is to help knit together the images which that language represents. This is mere psychological fact. The language cannot be grouped into structural units of rhythm without unifying to some degree that which the language chiefly represents, namely, the images. Rhythm is something felt in some degree by all men. It lies embedded in the very structure of our nerve-muscular organism. Here, then, is an effective process that can be used by the poet to help group and unify the images which really make up his poem. When Shakespeare adopts the iambic unit of measure in these lines; when he puts his lines into a rime scheme; when he uses a form which, by an arrangement of quatrains and couplet, affords a further sense of ebb and flow; he is making use of a process which, to the reader, may be known only as inherent delight but which has the *effect* of

binding more closely together, of moulding into a unit, first, the language itself, and second, through that, the images which the language is the means of arousing.

Regarded from the point of view of its effect, versifying takes the place of the practical necessity which compels the unifying of images on the physical plane. On the physical plane the demand that we shall hold together certain images, as of fire and burned finger, is so insistent that we come in time to forget that we are doing anything of the kind. When we get off this physical plane, we need something to help us even while it pleases us. In poetry the chief process to help us even while it pleases us is verse. Externally regarded, verse is language beaten into rhythm. But the real effect of rhythm is an inner effect, and this effect relates to the grouping and combining of images in the mind. Effective grouping and combining of images is chiefly a matter of association. In proportion as the grouping is a new one in experience or represents something not ordinarily attained in action, it is correspondingly difficult to hold together. The more original and unfamiliar the combination, the fewer the threads of association; the more the threads of association, the more easily is the grouping attained. I have pointed out some of the laws according to which images tend to suggest one another. In verse the poet superadds a further process. Verse is for poetry the golden thread of association. It is an aid

to memory. Knitting up words into recognisable but unobtrusive units, setting up pleasing bonds of association in language itself, the rhythm of verse necessarily supports and enforces those groupings of images of which language is the external symbol. The final effect of versifying is to help unify the new and original combinations which it is a part of the poet's task to create in the making of poetry.

VI.

That the distinct value of versifying in the making of poetry does lie in the support and enforcement which it lends to the combinations of images made by the poet, appears both historically and in everyday experience. As an historical fact, verse, as the more distinctive form of expression, has uniformly preceded prose. Prose comes later. There is, of course, some prose from the first. The business of life, conversations, public records—these and the like use prose. But for practically all other purposes verse is used. In Greece, the great forms of literary expression, epic, elegiac, lyric, and dramatic, had all reached the height of their inspiration and perfection before prose, as a standard form of expression, appeared. Even certain of the Ionian philosophers used verse, and others who wrote in prose made it of the sententious character that bordered on the poetical form of their day.

The same was true at Rome; verse, generally speaking, preceded prose. In our own tongue this priority of verse shows a like manifestation. "Long after Alfred," says Professor Ker, "there still remained . . . the natural antipathy of the natural man to listen to any continuous story except in verse. The dismal multitude of versified encyclopedias, the rhyming text-books of science, history, and morality, are there to witness of the reluctance with which prose was accepted to do the ordinary prose drudgery." The explanation of this priority of verse over prose seems to lie in the fact that the rhythm of verse-form was a real aid in helping men to group images and assimilate facts with which they were not familiar, and in enabling them to retain, in the lack of printing and of books, what they had once acquired.

This same value of verse appears in everyday experience. It is a familiar fact that many people find it difficult to remember what months in the year have thirty days and what months have thirty-one. How have they overcome their difficulty? They have put the fact that September and certain other months have but thirty days into a rough kind of riming verse:

"Thirty days hath September,
April, June, and November."

Now they can remember. They have a device which enables them to hold the names of these

particular months in a definite group. The same thing appears in other familiar examples. Everyone has seen the riming lines giving the order of succession of the kings and queens of England. The lines do not make poetry, and it is evidently not intended that they should; but they do, by reason of their rough metre and rime, enable one to remember the names in the order desired. Some have learned the lines which give the verbs in Latin governing the dative case:

“The dative put, remember pray,
After envy, spare, obey,
Persuade, believe, command, to these
Add pardon, succour, and displease;
With vacare, to have leisure,
And placere, to give pleasure,
With nubere, of the female said,
The English of it is to wed;
Servire add, and add studere,
Heal, favour, hurt, resist, and indulgere.”

Here is rime, and even a crude form of verse. The first two lines, for example, run:

x' x' x' x'
/x /x /x /^

Here again the rhythm of the verse has the sole purpose of enabling one to hold in connection a list of words difficult, as a mere list, to remember. Actual experiment confirms what I have said.

Other things being equal, lines thrown into a definite rhythmical form are found to be easier to memorise than equivalent lines of prose.

The general value of versifying as a process in the making of poetry seems, then, to be clear. Regarding the process in terms of its effects we can find a logical explanation for its use. This explanation is confirmed by history, by the experience of daily life, and by experiment. To be seen in the light of its distinctive function, verse must be regarded, not as an external thing, not as something merely mechanical; it should be examined in the light of its inner effects. Here only can the real end which it serves be discerned. In the making of poetry it is simply one more process contributing toward the end that the poet ever has in view—to make his groupings of images a unit, and, by doing so, to arouse refined emotion.

VII.

If this explanation of the end served by the process of versifying in the making of poetry is correct, it will account also for the several aspects, adjuncts, or embellishments of versifying. Rime, melody, and harmony, even alliteration and other pleasing but less tangible combinations of sound in verse, are all, independently regarded, merely structural variations of rhythm of language. And the central or final end they serve is identical

with, indeed it is a part of, the central effect of the rhythm of versifying. What we seek now is not the emotional, so-called spiritual, value of verse; we seek to confirm our general explanation by showing that each variation has, finally, the same effect as the central process itself. Each helps, in its special way, to support and enforce the combining of images; each is a special form of association. To confirm this statement an instance or two must suffice.

Let us first consider rime. Rime is the name in poetry for a correspondence of sound in two or more words. The correspondence, however, must not be complete. Words of identical sound, like "clime" and "climb," cannot properly be said to rime; in rime there must be difference as well as similarity of sound, as in "old" and "cold." When is rime used and what end does it serve?

Rime is used, in the first place, when the images are relatively familiar, unimportant, or lifeless. Generally, as the distinctive quality of the image diminishes, the need of obvious rime increases. Pope is an example. His images are not novel and striking. What he says "oft was thought, but ne'er so well express'd." In such lines as:

"Be not the first by whom the new are try'd,
Nor yet the last to lay the old aside;"

there is no striking or startling combination of images to stir and move the imagination; one

needs the whip-crack of the rime to make the epigram sting home; change the rime, you ruin the expression. The converse of our general proposition here is, of course, not true. The use of images that are novel, important, or vivid does not involve or imply a necessary absence of rime. In Rossetti's lines:

"O love, my love! if I no more should see
Thyself, nor on the earth the shadow of thee,
Nor image of thine eyes in any spring,—
How then should sound upon Life's darkening slope
The ground-whirl of the perished leaves of Hope,
The wind of Death's imperishable wing?"

there are novel and wonderfully vivid images, yet the lines rime. But the poem is a short one; the unity that has to be attained has therefore to be attained quickly; and rime, as a device of association by sound, is an aid to that end.

Rime is used, in the second place, as has just been implied, when a poem or a division of a poem is itself relatively short. The sonnet just quoted is an instance. The rime is a concession, really, to the exigencies of producing a sense of artistic unity within the limits of short space and time. Rime gives emphasis to individual parts and serves, by unifying them, to unify the whole. In the lines quoted, the rime is not used, as in Pope, to combine couplets; it is arranged so as to help effect quickly a larger whole. Even a long poem like *In Memoriam*, if it be made up of shorter

poems or, like the *Faery Queene*, of stanzas, may quite properly be written in rime. In *In Memoriam* the rime is not sharp and alternate; it has an arrangement suited to the wave-like movement of deep grief. The central conception, the final unity, the ultimate artistic significance cannot, in such cases, be either revealed or acquired at once; the poem as a whole is presumably a unit; but, since the parts are themselves small, rime as a help in effecting the individual units is often employed.

These truths about rime are confirmed when we turn to imposing subjects and great themes in poetry. Rime is undoubtedly effective very often in smaller wholes and in the treatment of relatively inconsequential themes; but in longer poems of lofty theme and broad division into parts, rime is always limiting, often destructive. Milton, for one, knew this. *Paradise Lost* is a long poem; its theme, too, is great; it seeks to justify the ways of God to men; the figures are Titanic; the poet's imagination circles the earth; it rises to heaven, and descends to hell; the universe is the scene of action; vastness is everywhere. And to Milton, rime is "no necessary adjunct . . . in longer works especially"; it makes all effects of greatness and vastness impossible. In describing Satan's wonderful flight, Milton knew that to sound each flap of those "sail-broad vanes" with a sharp, quick rime would check the flow of imagination. The hugeness of Satan's

figure which stood "like a tower," and the infinity of the space through which he moved, made a sweeping or periodic, rather than a rimed, verse-effect almost imperative.

"At last his sail-broad vanes
He spreads for flight, and in the surging smoke
Uplifted spurns the ground; thence many a league
As in a cloudy chair ascending rides
Audacious; but that seat soon failing, meets
A vast vacuity; all unawares
Flutt'ring his pennons vain plumb-down he drops
Ten thousand fathom deep."

Using rime in such a description would be like making a mountain of mosaics, or like the quick beating of a child's drum as an imitation of the crash and roar of a great storm. To the same kind of effect Shakespeare was evidently sensitive. At first, having little to say, dealing with no great themes, he jingles his rimes as prettily as any court poet:

"But are you not asham'd? nay, are you not,
All three of you, to be thus much o'ershot?
You found his mote; the king your mote did see;
But I a beam do find in each of three."

But when Shakespeare had grown in grasp and power, when he came to deal with storming passions and life-transforming ideas, he broke the bonds of rime:

"Blow, winds, and crack your cheeks! rage! blow!
You cataracts and hurricanoes, spout
Till you have drench'd our steeples, drown'd the
cocks!
You sulphurous and thought-executing fires,
Vaunt-couriers to oak-cleaving thunderbolts,
Singe my white head!"

Melody and harmony likewise find their logical explanation as means effecting the combination of images. Many riming couplets and many whole stanzas and even poems, though metrically satisfactory, fail, in some way, to become vital units; having succession they yet do not fuse and blend; they make only a group of disunited parts. Such verses lack in melody and harmony. Melody is the name for the pleasing effect which rhythmic succession of stressed and unstressed syllables has upon our ear; harmony is the name for the effect of the successive melodies of verse. Both appeal to feeling, or rather they are names for aspects of feeling produced, and both, suggesting conflict and difficulty overcome, tend to effect a sense of unity. Melody and harmony are the secret of unity in these lines, where rime would be limiting:

"Through many a dark and dreary vale
They passed, and many a region dolorous,
O'er many a frozen, many a fiery Alp,
Rocks, caves, lakes, fens, bogs, dens, and shades of
death,

A universe of death, which God by curse
Created evil, for evil only good,
Where all life dies, death lives, and nature breeds,
Perverse, all monstrous, all prodigious things,
Abominable, inutterable, and worse
Than fables yet have feigned, or fear conceived,
Gorgons and Hydras, and Chimeras dire."

Milton here groups images, as the greatest poets always do, on the basis of some conceived relation of similarity. Images of "dark and dreary vale," "region dolorous," "frozen . . . fiery Alp," "rocks . . . fens, bogs, dens, and shades of death," "universe of death," and the like are connected through some degree of similarity. But it is through melody and harmony that a common feeling tone is given to the lines. In this way, through the language, the poet helps to effect a unity *among the images*, which he could not otherwise successfully attain. What similarity is as an intellectual principle for the mere combining of images, melody and harmony are as an emotional principle for the unifying of images. What strikes our ear is melody and harmony of language,—sounds, really; what we really acquire is a group of images artistically unified. Melody and harmony, as special aspects of verse, share in the common effect of supporting and enforcing the grouping of images in poetry.

Exceptions to these general statements are, of course, to be expected. The mere use of rime, for example, does not mean that other devices

of verse which overshadow the more distinctive effect of rime may not be used. Rime may, in other words, be partially submerged in other effects. Goldsmith, like Pope, uses the heroic couplet. But how different the effect! Pope's couplets flash fire. They are pointed, epigrammatic; each couplet stands out by itself. And what chiefly makes it stand out is the rime, as one may see in the sense of flatness produced by changing a rime. But Goldsmith's lines flow:

“Sweet Auburn! loveliest village of the plain,
Where health and plenty cheer'd the labouring
 swain,
Where smiling spring its earliest visit paid,
And parting summer's lingering blooms delayed.”

Here, too, there is rime; but the rime is submerged in music. Rime, where it occurs, is an element of harmony; but it is here the least important element. The combination of images is enforced more through the melody and other elements of harmony than through the rime. The number of labials, for example, which contribute to this effect is especially noticeable in this passage.

Pleasing combinations of sound are also often used, perhaps not so much with the purpose, but certainly with the effect, of supporting and enforcing the grouping of images. No one with an ear sensitive to musical effect can fail to be influenced by the alliteration and the succession

of related and contrasted sounds in Milton's lines:

"At last his sail-broad vanes
He spreads for flight, and in the surging smoke
Uplifted spurns the ground,"

or in Shakespeare's lines:

"Let me not to the marriage of true minds
Admit impediments."

Tennyson contrasts two effects in the lines:

"By zigzag paths, and juts of pointed rock,
Came on the shining levels of the lake."

Such devices serve to enforce the rhythm. We anticipate the recurrence not of certain measures merely but of certain combinations of consonant and vowel sounds. Finding our expectations fulfilled we are gratified and the grouping of images is facilitated. Even when we do not read such lines aloud, we feel the effect of such devices, for the music of former readings echoes in our ear. Varying means are used to produce appropriate effects. Any one can see the difference between the two lines of the last passage just quoted; or between the sound-devices used in the sonorous roll of *Paradise Lost* and the vivacious movement of the song in Tennyson's *Brook*.

Versifying, then, viewed in any of its aspects, has one central and final effect: it supports, en-

forces, and helps to unify the new and original combinations of images made by the poet. The measured rhythm of metre, rime, melody and harmony, alliteration and other pleasing sound-effects in verse, are simply varying means, not always mutually exclusive, seldom used independently, of bringing into organic unity, first, language, and second, the images of which that language is the sign or symbol. What we know, what we are directly aware of, as we read great verse, is an emotional, so-called spiritual, apparently inevitable, expression; what we really acquire is an organic group of images, a new-found unity, of which this emotional expression is the spontaneous and unvarying manifestation. Disregarding for the moment this emotional expression, and looking to its underlying cause, we find that versifying, whatever aspect, adjunct, or embellishment of it we consider, is a process which has the inevitable inner effect of supporting, enforcing, and unifying the poet's new and original combinations of images.

VIII.

The question of the music of verse—our third question to consider—may be said to grow out of an exception, or apparent exception, to our general explanation. To some, the final explanation of verse or versifying lies in the inherent delight which the music of rhythmical language,

as expressed in verse, affords. Verse is not used because it serves any end in particular; it is used because the music of it affords pleasure; the music of the verse is something superadded merely to the poetry itself. In speaking of the material of poetry, I referred to the possibility of regarding language, broken into the rhythm and melody of verse, apart from its meaning or even directly of its suggestive value, as making poetry. This situation represents the extreme aspect of this whole question, and to explain it is to justify the music of verse everywhere in poetry.

We know by experience that it not infrequently happens that readers, and perhaps especially children, regard the mere musical effect of language, the sheer beauty of sound, as making poetry. Nor can their judgment be disputed. A feeling which is indistinguishable from poetic feeling evidently is, for many persons of an emotional temperament and, as I have said, perhaps especially for children, often produced in just this way. Sometimes, indeed, the feeling for poetry is first awakened and quickened, not through lines that could possibly be intelligible; not through lines in which, though the words be intelligible, any meaning could be discerned; certainly not through lines heavily charged with meaning; but merely through the effect of this kind of versified, musical language.

In some cases, the words themselves may indeed be Greek to the hearer, as in the lines:

ὥς μ' ὄφελ' ἤματι τῷ ὅτε με πρῶτον τέκε μήτηρ
ὀΐχασθαι προφέρουσα κακὴ ἀνέμοιο θύελλα
εἰς ὄρος ἢ εἰς κύμα πολυφλοίσβοιο θαλάσσης.

In others, the words themselves may be intelligible, but the whole carry no real sense, as in the lines:

"How happy to defend our heart,
When Love has never thrown a dart!
But ah! unhappy when it bends,
If pleasure her soft bliss suspends!
Sweet in a wild disordered strain,
A lost and wandering heart to gain!
Oft in mistaken language wooed
The skilful lover 's understood."

In still others, the words may be separately intelligible, and the passage as a whole carry some elusive thought which is not apprehended. This is quite possible, for example, in the stanza:

"O hollow wraith of dying fame,
Fade wholly, while the soul exults,
And self-infolds the large results
Of force that would have forged a name."

In each case, the effect of the lines upon the reader or hearer may be to open the flood-gates of the mind and let loose, perhaps for the first time, the rhapsodies of poetic enjoyment. Some magic in the language, some music as of the spheres, unheard before, carries the hearer on the

wings of imagination to heaven's gate itself. "Read some more," ever cries the child, still unsatiated with the ecstatic delights of vaguely suggestive musical sounds that open up a world of mystery and wonder to his imagination.

Poets, too, not infrequently make a conscious appeal to this kind of appreciation of mere rhythmical language. Poe does it in his *Bells*:

"Hear the sledges with the bells—
Silver bells!

What a world of merriment their melody foretells!
How they tinkle, tinkle, tinkle,
In the icy air of night!"

Tennyson does it in the lines:

"O hark, O hear! how thin and clear,
And thinner, clearer, farther going!
O sweet and far from cliff and scar
The horns of Elfland faintly blowing!
Blow, let us hear the purple glens replying:
Blow, bugle; answer, echoes, dying, dying, dying"

and again, with added effects, in:

"Dry clash'd his harness in the icy caves
And barren chasms, and all to left and right
The bare black cliff clanged round him, as he based
His feet on juts of slippery crag that rang
Sharp-smitten with the dint of armed heels—
And on a sudden, lo! the level lake,
And the long glories of the winter moon."

Such lines as:

“What thing unto mine ear
Wouldst thou convey,—what secret thing,
O wandering water ever whispering?
Surely thy speech shall be of her,
Thou water, O thou whispering wanderer,
What message dost thou bring?”

make their appeal as much through the melody of the language, it would seem, as through any thought conveyed or any feeling revealed. Burns, we know, wrote most of his songs by fitting words to some well-known melody. “Until I am complete master of a tune in my own singing (such as it is),” he says, “I can never compose to it.” To “sowthe the tune” over and over he found was the best way to catch the inspiration. His songs thus grew out of the melody; they sing themselves; they are almost pure music; perhaps no poetry that we have better indicates how near at times poetry and music are to being identical.

This kind of musical effect in versified language is often the means of awakening readers or hearers to the beauty of poetry; it is sometimes consciously made use of as a means of appeal by poets; it is at times the starting-point of poetic composition. In all such cases the selection and arrangement of images is not so much for the sake of the images as for the sake of the music which the words themselves make. And it is quite possible to think of this kind of musical effect as separate

from other processes which go to make poetry what it is. A rational explanation of the musical element in poetry might seem to lie in the inherent delight that the music of verse affords. Yet, to maintain that the inherent delight we have in the music of verse is the justification of the use of verse in poetry is to beg the whole question. Pleasure in the mere music of poetry there undoubtedly is. It is safe, too, to say that, unless verse did afford this pleasure, it would not be a part of poetry. Yet it is not, after all, merely because verse yields pleasure that it is used. Verse is used, finally, because of the unity of mind which it helps to effect. The pleasure that we know is a sign or token, nothing more, of a new-found unity of mind. But because the unity has come through the effect of a rhythmical arrangement of sound-relations which are connected with language, we call what we hear poetry. What we know, what we are conscious of, is the pleasure; what we do, what we must do to find the pleasure, is to group images, however vague and intangible, into new relations. There is and can be no pleasure in the rhythm of language except as the mind, to some degree, falls into unity.

Plato said poetry was a lie. It is indeed full of illusions, none more deceptive than this one. To be charmed by the music of verse is but to acknowledge all unconsciously that some degree of unity of mind has been brought about. Where

the images are vague, intangible, rapidly floating; where the melody of the words seems actually to swamp the language, we think of the music of the verse merely; where the images are novel and striking, vivid and imposing, there is less occasion to think of the music or to depend upon it; it is, as commonly in blank verse, suffused. Poetry and music occupy, in part at least, common ground. They are not identical, but they do overlap. Poetry, aiming, as a rule, to effect new and original combinations of images, to group these in a unified state of mind which shall glow into feeling, brings music to its aid. Music, depending upon the harmonious arrangement of sound-relations, can effect unity of mind more rapidly than poetry. Occasionally, the poet is willing to depend chiefly upon these sound-relations. He makes use of language, but he does not make it suggest definite images. What he makes is called poetry, chiefly because of its connection with language. But, whether it be in lines of mere melody or in the great drama, verse is used, not primarily because it yields some inherent delight; it yields delight because it helps to effect what is never easy to attain, what always indicates difficulty and conflict overcome—unity of mind. In the last analysis, therefore, however separable from poetry the music of verse may appear to be, and however it may seem that the music of poetry finds its place by virtue of the inherent delight it affords, it is finally in helping to support and

enforce the new and original combinations of images into significant forms that the musical element in poetry, regarded independently, finds its true explanation.

IX.

In what I have said so far about versifying, I have confined myself almost exclusively to the poetry of cultivated society. But the principles of the making of poetry, if they apply generally, will be true of primitive poetry as well. Some of the various types of poetry will presently be considered; but it is important to observe here a few of the changes, so far as rhythm is concerned, that take place in poetry in its growth from its early to its later forms.

How, why, when, or where the making of verse came into existence no one exactly knows. In its early stages, poetry was not independent. It was knit up with various religious, tribal, ceremonial functions and services; it was not regarded as a distinct and independent form of social expression. One bond at least of the union of these different kinds of social expression seems to have been rhythm. As he sang his song the primitive man danced, clapped his hands, stamped his feet, beat his breast, or made some other rhythmical movement to keep time with his words. Practically all that he knew of rhythm on its mental side had its definite physical coun-

terpart. To the primitive man, æsthetic delight and rhythmical bodily movement were practically inseparable. It is often so with children. One sees a butterfly and cries, "The pretty butterfly!" Then, as he skips along, he sings, "The pret'ty, pret'ty but'terfly',"⁸ throwing his words into rhythmical form to correspond with his physical movement. All early forms of poetry reveal the close connection between rhythm of words and rhythm of bodily movement. But, gradually, there comes a time when the actual physical movement begins to drop out. Ballads represent an intermediate stage. At least half their social effect and their æsthetic value depended upon their being sung or chanted; and often, as in playing the harp, they were accompanied with more or less bodily movement. In a later development cultured society exerts a repressive influence upon all such physical accompaniments of emotion. Physical movement gradually drops out; what we call the poetry stands alone. The loss of the actual physical movement is serious, for the unifying effect upon the mind of rhythmical bodily movement is something far from being confined to primitive people. But there are compensations, some of them unsuspected in their function. As bodily movement falls away from poetry, other means are used to help effect that unity which marks the grouping of images. These means include those structural variations of rhythm that I have mentioned, such as melody,

harmony, rime, and alliteration. What we call the beauty of sound in the language of poetry has commonly more than a mere musical effect; it is a part-compensation for the loss of bodily rhythm.

Nor is this all. Though neither poet nor reader may ever suspect it, it is nevertheless true that figures of speech, especially the metaphor, serve the same end. Part of the physical movement carried out by the primitive man was in the form of gesture. The story he told, the song he sang, was illustrated by movements. Prominent among these movements were those which correspond to our metaphor. The successful hunter, the lucky fisherman, actually licked and smacked his lips as he told his tale; if unsuccessful, he turned his face awry. Civilisation has had a repressive effect upon such gestures. But the sense of gratification underlying this kind of expression never dies. In poetry unaccompanied by actual movement, accordingly, we look for something that shall compensate for the loss. Lacking the aid of physical movement, verse calls into use words wrought into figures so novel and striking as to startle the mind into a lively activity not unlike that produced by movement itself. Consider Keats's sonnet:

"Bright Star! would I were steadfast as thou art—
Not in lone splendour hung aloft the night,
And watching, with eternal lids apart,
Like Nature's patient sleepless Eremite,

The moving waters at their priestlike task
Of pure ablution round earth's human shores,
Or gazing on the new soft fallen mask
Of snow upon the mountains and the moors:—
No—yet still steadfast, still unchangeable,
Pillow'd upon my fair Love's ripening breast
To feel for ever its soft fall and swell,
Awake for ever in a sweet unrest;
Still, still to hear her tender-taken breath,
And so live ever,—or else swoon to death.”

In this sonnet, felicities of expression, such as the “moving waters at their priestlike task Of pure ablution round earth's human shores,” drive in upon the mind with an awakening effect not unlike that of movement itself. This effect of original combinations is enforced by the use of words of motion. Words of motion, as compared with static or non-action words, yield a keener poetic satisfaction; they effect by suggestion an actual partial reinstatement of muscular adjustment, however modified, which is appropriate to the object named. The sonnet form, too, as I have suggested, has other advantages. The skill shown by the poet in giving felicitous expression to what he has to say, though he is confined to the limits of a definitely fixed poetical form, affords something of the same kind of pleasure that any difficult but rhythmical action, gracefully executed under trying conditions, affords. The ebb and flow of the sonnet form, typified especially in the octave and sestet,

also have their definite counterpart in physical movement. It would seem, therefore, that many of the minor effects of verse in its later forms find their logical explanation as means of compensation for the actual rhythmical movement of body that accompanied poetry in all its early forms. Early forms of poetry are accompanied by actual physical movement; and this movement contributes directly, especially on the side of unity, to the æsthetic effect produced; in later forms of poetry, a partial means of compensation for the lack of actual movement is found in some of the structural variations of simple rhythm, such as rime, melody, harmony, and alliteration; in illuminating figures of speech, especially the metaphor; in perfected and more complex verse-forms, often structurally organised so as to suggest a definite kind of rhythmic movement; in words of motion so used as to afford relief and pleasure by effecting a degree of actual muscular adjustment appropriate to the state of mind attained.

X.

Regarded from all points of view, versifying as a process in the making of poetry finds its most satisfactory explanation, not through the consideration of its external form, but in terms of its inner effects. Though there are poems in prose, even these are but slight departures from con-

formity with the requirements of formal verse; they have a rhythm akin to the rhythm of poetry. Versifying is correctly described as a process which is essential to the making of poetry. Measured rhythm is its life. In primitive poetry the rhythm has its physical counterpart; in the poetry of civilisation this physical element softens into more delicate and pleasing effects. But everywhere verse, as measured rhythm, has its common end. The inner effect it has, the final end it serves, is to support, enforce, and help unify the new and original groupings of images which the poet makes. The vivid language of the poet, his forceful verb, his illuminating adjective, is designed to startle an old image into life or to create a new one; the rhythm into which his language falls, the elusive but soul-moving music that pervades his verse, is but a golden thread on which he strings his pearls. By subtle illusion the poet leads us to believe that we are merely being stirred with music, but, even as he led us all unconsciously to create worlds of imagination while we thought we were doing it ourselves, so he casts the magic of his musical language upon us and leads us, all unwittingly but still with deep joy, to bind in closer unity the images which he has enabled us to call before our minds.

CHAPTER VI

The Nature of Poetry

In the life of the same individual there is succession and not absolute unity: a man is called the same, and yet in the short interval which elapses between youth and age, he is undergoing a perpetual process of loss and reparation, which is true not only of the body, but also of the soul, whose habits, opinions, desires, pleasures, pains and fears, never remain the same in any one of us, but are always coming and going.—PLATO.

CHAPTER VI

THE NATURE OF POETRY

I.

OUR second question, "What are the processes which go to make poetry what it is?" is now answered; we have seen what they are and what they do. Personalising—the poet's self-projection into things and people, the reading of his own experience, restricted only by truth, into all that is about him, and the reflection of this in the images he uses; combining—the grouping, under the final test of truth, in a new and independent way, of images which stand for things and persons into which the poet has projected his life; versifying—the subtle device of throwing language into rhythmical form in order, through its inner effect, to enforce and support these new combinations;—these are the essential processes which go to make poetry what it is. But, as I have said, these processes are not separate and distinct; they do not work independently; rather, they are but parts of a total creative activity which moves as a whole. An advantage is, however, gained through the logical distinction of these

processes. We are able now, in the light of this distinction, satisfactorily to answer our third question, "What is the nature of poetry?" The nature of a thing can best be understood through a knowledge of the laws of its being; and to know the principles which govern the making of poetry is to be able to understand the essential nature of poetry.

II.

If, now, in the attempt to explain what the nature of poetry really is we revert to the mental image for a moment we may see something of interest and consequence. All men, we know, to some extent project themselves into objects and people about them; they personalise them; they humanise them; and the images of which they make use necessarily retain the original degree of personalising. Seeing that my desk, as I say, *stands* upon the floor, I think of the image of it in the same way. Even when I am not in the room where my desk is, I still say it stands upon the floor; I do not see my desk; I have only an image of it before my mind; but, so far as this and other qualities of it are concerned, I deal with that image in precisely the same way that I would with the object itself.

This truth, trifling and inconsequential as it may at first appear, is of almost inestimable

importance in the making of poetry. For each image that any one ever calls up represents, really, a bit of his personality; it is a part of himself; it denotes something into which he has put a portion of his life. Merely to bring images into relation, then, to combine them, no matter whether the form into which they are combined be the fantastic creation of a whimsical child or the significant product of a man of affairs, is, so far, to extend the area of personality; and to regroup images so as to represent some fuller conformity to the laws of Nature and of thought, is to effect an actual building up of personality. The poet, we know, differs from other men in that he projects himself into persons and things to a unique degree; he enters more abundantly into their life than other men do. His images, in consequence, carry a richer content and bear a fuller measure of life than do the images of most men; they are surcharged with personality. And his combining of images, we also know, is unique. Leaving the path of convention, the poet combines his images into new and original forms. Attracted like the young child by the pure delight of making startling and wonder-stirring combinations, he shapes his creations into a *Midsummer Night's Dream*; led to pursue eternal truth, he achieves the lofty and truthful synthesis of a *Divine Comedy* or a *Paradise Lost*. But, be his artistic purpose grave or gay, what the poet chiefly does as he brings images into organic

relation is to knit up hitherto unrelated bits of his own life into new and distinctive forms. He extends the area of his own personality. He builds it up into something more than it has been. He effects a furtherance of life. As the poet thus regroups and reorganises images he makes something relatively new out of the old material of experience. He projects life along new lines which the unaided personality of the ordinary man would never discern or find. The poet comes into possession, in this way, of something consciously sought or blindly groped for by others. He serves an end which I shall call self-realisation.

Self-realisation is precisely what the term itself implies. It is a realising of one's self. Each man has within him the capacity for becoming more than he is. What he hopes for and what he wishes to be are recorded in his aims and ambitions; and he concedes that he is capable of becoming something more than he is simply by his having these aims and ambitions. He has a potential self that he is ever striving to become, that he is ever aiming to realise. As each man gains some of his ends he may be said to realise himself. The child who burned his finger brought images into connection which had not been so connected before; and, bringing these images together, he discovered a new area in his own personality; he became more of a person than he was before; he stumbled upon a new aspect, not of life merely, but of himself. Keats, the boy reader, coming

upon Spenser's phrase, "sea-shouldering whales," knit up images for the first time that had not fallen into that particular combination. The separate images represented, as it were, scattered and unrelated bits of Keats's experience; they were parts of himself which had never fallen into any organic relation. As he read the phrase, these parts of himself, parts hitherto unrelated, suddenly leaped together; they flashed with a new significance; and this experience shocked the young reader's mind into such joyous and ecstatic delight, as he discovered a new aspect of himself, that he cried out. In this way Keats in a measure realised himself. He discovered an aspect of his own personality which he had not known before, and he recognised it as a new part of his life. So, too, with other men. Forced by Nature or moved by their own choice, for good or for ill, in joy or in grief, in forms fantastic or true to life, men extend the area of their personalities by effecting combinations of images not ordinarily attained in their conventional experience; they group together hitherto unrelated bits of their own lives. Whenever, indeed, any one makes, or has effected for him, a new combination of images, whenever he regains or restores an old one that has broken down or been forgotten, whenever he knits up images into fresh combinations, he becomes more of a personality; he realises himself.

III.

The poet is a man who, with distinctive success, realises his potential self and enables other people to do the same kind of thing. Freed from the barnacles of practical demands, untrammelled by considerations of use and immediate value, he groups images either in accordance with, or with regard to, fundamental laws of Nature and of personality. His grouping may be ephemeral, as in the sensuous poetry of Rossetti or of Swinburne, where there are no imposing ideas; it may be playful and fanciful, with its end largely in diversion, as in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*; it may relate to a refined kind of spiritual idealism, as in Shelley; to a joy in love and happiness, as in Burns; to a sober and philosophic conception of Nature, as in Wordsworth; to universal man, as in the tragedies of Shakespeare; but, whatever the artistic aim or purpose of the poet, the final end achieved is the same: the poet realises his potential self.

And he helps other people to do the same kind of thing. Alike for individual and society at large, poetry is the most comprehensive and effective medium through which the lives of men may be reorganised and elevated to the plane of universal truth. Forced by ever-pressing conditions of practical necessity, most men live their lives chiefly in the valleys; they must earn and eat their bread; they must plan their lives with a view to

advantages of self-interest. But even in the moment of achievement they fail of satisfaction. Even the most sordid among them has some touch of innate nobility that spurs him on beyond the animal stage of life; that makes him seek the vision at the mountain-top; that moves him to be something more than he is. Through the aid of the poet he builds up life anew; he finds the rude and commonplace facts of life transformed into ideal worlds; he reaches heights where he seems strangely and sweetly to come into possession of his true self; he realises himself. "The very greatest poets," says one, himself a poet, "have a way, I admit, of getting within our inmost consciousness and in a manner betraying us to ourselves." This is self-realisation.

True, the poet deals only with images. But the images represent things that are real in life. Regrouped they signify a new order; an order where men are or may be what they ideally wish themselves to be; an order where some goal of consciousness is won, some dominant interest achieved. Poets differ, too, in the means they use. Each, according to the predilections of temperament and to accidents of environment, chooses, now in nature, now among men, images of things into which he has poured out the largest measure of his life. Truth of representation, too, rises and falls. Some, like Pope, catch but a naked truth; some, like Shelley, hear a strain of music; a few, like Dante and Shakespeare,

reach eternal law. But, whatever the medium, and whatever the success of representation, the grouping of images always represents, both for poet and reader, the means of some degree of self-realisation.

IV.

To show how this self-realisation comes about for the reader of poetry, I shall consider *Hamlet*. There will, of course, be special circumstances owing to the fact that we are dealing with a drama; there will be special applications because the images are those of human beings; yet the general principles will be the same for all poetry. If we can see clearly in one great instance precisely what this self-realisation is that poetry effects for readers, we shall be able without difficulty to apply the idea in special cases.

When one reads *Hamlet* he derives something which, in a sense, the author does not give. What is directly presented to us is a failing Hamlet. But the Hamlet we most truly know is an ideal character splendidly capable of success. Tragedy without an implied background of success and happiness is inconceivable; failure becomes intelligible, it is comprehensible only as it implies some kind of possible success. That we commonly do not realise this fact as we read the play, that we think we are absorbed in the failing Hamlet, is simply a tribute to the

great art of the poet. Complementary to the failing Hamlet is a successful Hamlet whom we ourselves construct in imagination. This is not the Hamlet portrayed on the pages of our text, but it is the real Hamlet whom the author himself truly knows and enables us to know; he is the real Hamlet of the play.

What is the significance of this fact? What is it that Shakespeare, through his representation, enables his reader or spectator to do? The answer need not be uncertain. Each reader or spectator does two things: (1) he builds up for himself in imagination an ideal and successful Hamlet; and (2) so long at least as he is in the æsthetic attitude he *becomes* that character. Each of these points has its bearing upon self-realisation.

And first, the building up of the ideal and successful Hamlet. How is it done? It begins, I believe, in the unconscious setting up of standards of feeling, thought, and action, according to which the reader or spectator judges that Hamlet might and should have acted. When, for example, in the second act, Hamlet spends his hours making the shallow and egotistical Polonius appear ridiculous; when he winds the sycophants, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, into confusion; when he delights in players, while still "this thing 's to do"; when, later, Hamlet the gentleman falls a-cursing like a very drab; when he uses coarse language to Ophelia, and rails against his

mother; whenever, indeed, any expression of Hamlet's action, thought, or feeling calls forth the judgment of reader or spectator, a standard according to which that judgment is made is necessarily, however unconsciously, set up.

Nor is the reader or spectator subjected to the strain of having to make all his judgments independently. Shakespeare aids him. Throughout the play, Shakespeare suggests by subtle devices some of the more essential standards according to which Hamlet is evidently being judged. And he does this with such consummate skill as to make his reader or spectator not only unconscious of what he is being led to do, but to make him glow with delight in the belief that he is doing it himself. If, absorbed in Hamlet's hatred of insincerity and sham; in the cleverness with which Polonius is made ridiculous; or in the display of insight through which the purposes of the new-found spies Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are laid bare, the reader or spectator temporarily loses his true moral perspective of Hamlet's character, he can scarcely fail to regain it as he hears Hamlet, out of his own mouth, condemn himself for trifling with his acknowledged life purpose:

"O, what a rogue and peasant slave am I!
Is it not monstrous that this player here,
But in a fiction, in a dream of passion,
Could force his soul so to his own conceit
That from her working all his visage wann'd;

. . . What would he do,
Had he the motive and the cue for passion
That I have?"

He gets another cue from the words addressed by Hamlet to his friend Horatio:

" . . . thou hast been
As one, in suffering all, that suffers nothing,
A man that fortune's buffets and rewards
Hath ta'en with equal thanks,"

for, if he reflect but a moment, he must realise that, improbable as all this really is for Horatio, who, like Hamlet, is merely a young university student, it represents precisely what Hamlet himself had not, but should have, done; he sees that Horatio is a foil that makes Hamlet "stick fiery off indeed." Again, at the close of the play, when Fortinbras, the man of practical achievement, says of Hamlet:

"For he was likely, had he been put on,
To have proved most royally"

a judgment of Hamlet's capacity for deeds is made by the reader or spectator, however unconsciously, which is corrective of an opposite one probably set up by the pathetic story of Hamlet's indecision and inaction. In truth, all such speeches, and even entire characters, Horatio, the King, Fortinbras, are finally to be

justified as essential parts of the organic whole in that they are but subtle means of keeping the standards of reader or spectator safely within the channels of proper artistic judgment. Aided in this way by the artist, the reader or spectator is able to set up a series of standards according to which, now in action, now in thought, now in feeling, he judges Hamlet to have made but partial achievements or to have failed. What Shakespeare presents is a tragic character, one yielding, breaking, disintegrating, dying; what the reader constructs in imagination is a complementary character, one striving, achieving, and living, one who is a perfectly unified character.

And second, it is this positive, successful, living, ideal, and perfectly unified character which, in imagination, each reader or spectator of the play actually becomes. According to his range of experience, to his insight, and to his aptitude, every genuine reader or true spectator, to the extent and for the moment that he has the æsthetic experience, actually becomes, in consciousness, the ideal character which he has conceived. Let us see how.

All the standards which any one makes use of in judging Hamlet are but reflections of his own potential self⁹; they are a part of himself. A standard of feeling, of thought, or of action which any one holds, is something to which he regards himself as at least potentially capable of rising; it is, in the truest sense, a reflection of

himself. Each reader's conception of the ideal Hamlet is therefore simply his own ideal and potential self; it is a reflection of his inner—often unknown and unsuspected—self. Are the reader's standards bloody? Would he have blood for blood? The play allows for that; blood-revenge may be Hamlet's duty. Or do his standards point another way? Would he have Hamlet force the king from his throne, bring him to a confession of his crime, and to justice? The play allows for that too. Or would he not demand external success at all, and ask simply that Hamlet put forth an honest and sustained moral effort to set things right? This too, from what the play reveals, might be Hamlet's duty. Even thus do standards vary. The Hamlet conceived by the boy who merely gets the story and thinks of the young prince as one that unhappily misses the throne and loses his life, is surpassed by the Hamlet of the man even of narrow and prosaic experience; this Hamlet, again, is surpassed by that of the man of large vision, rich in experience and in knowledge of life. But what each sees, and all that he ever can see, is a representation of himself, not as he is, but as he may or ought, in part, to be. The play holds the mirror up to nature; and what each sees is after all not Hamlet, not even himself as he really is, but a reflection of what he himself is capable of becoming. All the standards which any reader ever groups together represent his

own potential self. His ideal Hamlet is his own ideal self—one which he may become.

It is this ideal self that each reader or spectator becomes. So long as he remains in an æsthetic attitude, so long as the flash of pleasure and delight lasts, he actually becomes his ideal and potential self; he *is* that self which he conceives. The ideal of himself, so vainly and ineffectually pursued in the world of dust and action, suddenly becomes, in imagination, both real and present. The experience may last but for a moment; in any case it must be very short; but for that sweet moment he has held himself at the high level where is

“ . . . the most difficult of tasks to *keep*
Heights which the soul is competent to gain.”

In consciousness, in mind and soul, not in reality, not in the world of action as yet, he *is* for the moment his ideal self. In the last analysis, what each man who reads *Hamlet*, or for that matter any other poem or play, does, is to come into actual temporary realisation of some phase of his ideal and potential self. In his mind and heart he suddenly becomes more than he was; he grasps new thoughts, experiences new feelings, achieves new forms of action. In his inner life he is, for a moment at least, a new and other being than he has been. What he has desired and hoped for, what he has long striven with defeated

effort to attain, he now achieves in the twinkling of an eye. And to the degree that *Hamlet* is a truly artistic play, and the reader or spectator is capable of understanding it, will this new self thus attained for the moment in consciousness be his best self.

V.

The experience attained in this way by one who sympathetically follows *Hamlet* represents what I mean by self-realisation. Everywhere the experience is a common one. As the primitive man dances and sings his war song he *is* for the moment the victorious warrior; as the child reads his nursery rime or acts out his little part he *is*, often with the protest of tears, the lion, the engineer, the giant that he imagines himself to be; as the cultured adult follows the scene in the drama he plays at being the hero; as he writes his poem of grief he renews his early joys; even as he catches the novel phrase which shocks his mind into a new delight he in some measure realises himself. The primitive man, the child, the cultured adult, no matter what the stage of social development, in some degree realises himself through poetry. For poet, reader, or hearer to realise himself through poetry, is to reorganise and reconstruct the elements of experience. It is to realise in consciousness, for a moment, aims and purposes which he has not been able to realise

where the effect is that of an anti-climax. Sometimes, too, the poet seems to lose his point of view as an artist; he seems to be afraid to leave his poetry free to convey its own impression. In such cases he is usually dominated by some moral, religious, or intellectual conception; his magician's wand becomes the pedagogic pointer. But whenever the poet, either through weakness or choice, deserts the point of view of the artist he fails; for, as Keats somewhere says, "We hate poetry that has a palpable design upon us . . . poetry should be great and unobtrusive." It was this kind of palpable design that at times made Wordsworth's moral earnestness override his artistic purpose. Fearing lest *Hart-Leap Well* might not convey a definite impression, he pointed his moral unmistakably:

"One lesson, Shepherd, let us two divide,

Never to blend our pleasure or our pride
With sorrow of the meanest thing that feels."

Bryant, in the same way, limited his otherwise effective and beautiful poem, *To a Water-Fowl*:

“ . . . yet, on my heart
Deeply hath sunk the lesson thou hast given,
And shall not soon depart:

"He who, from zone to zone,
Guides through the boundless sky thy certain flight,
In the long way that I must tread alone,
Will lead my steps aright."

The fine self-realisation, the enlargement, expansion, and ennobling of life ideally possible through these poems is limited by the poet's driving his reader upon the pricks of moral consciousness. "The instructions conveyed in it," as Lamb said once of one of Wordsworth's poems, "are too direct; they don't slide into the mind of the reader while he is imagining no such matter."

The same limitation appears in the larger wholes of poetry. Tennyson in his *Idylls* allows his moral and religious interest in "sense at war with soul" to swamp his artistic judgment. He makes King Arthur an artistic bore. Arthur is perfect. In character he is a contrast to Hamlet. There are no deficiencies to make good, no incomplete achievements to perfect, no exalted services to provide, no eminent distinctions to win; there is no fault, no neglected duty, no sin to condemn. Nothing but a cold glare of moral purity falls upon the reader's eager mind. Imagination lies dead. There is nothing for it to do; the artist has, alas! done all. With Arthur made perfect, the stimulus for the reader to build up the elements of his own experience into an ideal personality (which he would call Arthur) is gone. To the shock of the narrow moralist, evil seems more attractive than good. The reader prefers the sinning Lancelot and Guinevere; for out of their sins and imperfections he can build up ideals of character. There his imagination is left practically free to construct for itself. The longer

he gazes the more he can add; and the more he adds, the more he thinks he sees. What Tennyson has done in the *Idylls*, Milton has done in *Paradise Lost*. Starting with the avowed object "To justify the ways of God to men," he unwittingly made Satan his masterpiece, realising his own Titanic will and strength, and enabling us to realise our potential power better in him than in Adam and Eve, or even in his God.

In all such cases the poet, it would seem, is unwilling that the imagination and judgment of the reader should be left free to gather the artistic significance of his poem, that they should be carried passively rather than consciously into the realm of truth. Always, no matter how perfect in some respect the poetic representation of a thing or person may be, there must be some occasion, some room, for the play of imagination; there must be some opportunity for the reader to construct for himself, to supplement, to add, to supply almost endlessly out of his own experience; always he must be left free to do more for himself than the poet does for him; and yet to do something which, without the poet's aid, he could by himself never effectively attain. He must be able, through the artistic medium, in some way and to some degree, to realise himself, his potential self.

VI.

It needs no argument and but little citation to show that the building up of personality in

this way into new and unattained kinds of self-realisation is to flood the mind with deep and refined feeling. The poet's joys of sense, we know, are exceptionally keen. His eye and ear, even his sense of touch and of smell, are more sensitive than are those of other men. He sees more, hears more, draws more widely from all the world of sense than do his fellow-men. He catches magic notes from the music of his verse. But, keener than all this is the joy of grouping images into new organic forms, of creating new personalities out of the old material of life. "Heard melodies," a poet tells us, "are sweet, but those unheard are sweeter." They are

". . . the mind's
Internal echo of the imperfect sound."

The real sound is imperfect always. Joys of imagination are sweeter than the joys of sense, for "narrow is the world and the mind is wide." Probably no finer joy ever comes to the mind of man than that which springs from this act of grouping images. My artist friend described his "sense of control" as the most exhilarating and gratifying experience he ever came to know. Goethe tells us that it was his "poetic mind and creative power" that made him really happy. Wordsworth's mind wantoned with grateful joy in the exercise of its own powers, "loving its own creation." "Mighty is the charm," he says,

"Of those abstractions to a mind beset
With images, and haunted by herself,
And specially delightful unto me
Was that clear synthesis built up aloft
So gracefully; even then when it appeared
Not more than a mere plaything, or a toy,
To sense embodied."

The idea is echoed by Elizabeth Barrett: "If my poetry is worth anything to any eye," she says, "it is the flower of me. I have lived most and been most happy in it. . . . For happiness—why, my only idea of happiness, as far as my personal enjoyment is concerned—lies deep in poetry and its associations." Keats looked upon fine phrases "like a lover"; he would have written, he tells us, for the mere yearning and fondness for the beautiful, even if his "night's labours should be burnt every morning, and no eye ever shine upon them."

This pleasure, which springs from the grouping or combining of images, is enjoyed by the reader also. Here and there will be found a reader whose pleasure equals or even surpasses that of the poet himself. Keats, the young reader-poet, burst into song when he first read Chapman's translation of Homer:

"Then felt I like some watcher of the skies
When a new planet swims into his ken;
Or like stout Cortez, when with eagle eyes
He star'd at the Pacific,—and all his men
Look'd at each other with a wild surmise—
Silent, upon a peak in Darien."

But every reader, whether he be a potential poet or not, knows what the pleasure of this kind of self-discovery and attainment through poetry is. Every one has at some time read with

“ . . . that inward eye
That is the bliss of solitude.”

He has, through the aid of the poet, come to possess new experiences and to renew old ones; he has had the elements of his personality reconstructed and reorganised into forms which he has himself felt powerless to attain; he has been filled with joy, because at last, almost without effort, he has been able to gain the heights of life; he has been able to echo the words of Wolsey:

“Never so truly happy . . .
I know myself now; and I feel within me
A peace above all earthly dignities.”

This peace above all earthly dignities is not without its deep-lying cause in human nature. I have said that the separate images which float about in an unorganised or only an imperfectly organised manner in our minds really represent bits of our own personality. And we have seen that to have these images built up into unattained or new forms means that the personality itself is being built up. We have seen, too, that this building up process is one that carries with it a deep pleasure. But there is more to it than this.

All the deeper forms of pleasure come as a result, not of a merely accidental grouping of images, but of a distinctive kind of grouping—the images must be unified. Let us see what this means.

Unity is a term common to all art. It is a quality or characteristic usually regarded as inhering in some way in the work of art itself. So regarded, it means singleness of purpose; it is the "combination into a homogeneous artistic whole, exhibiting oneness of purpose, thought, spirit, and style, with subordination of all parts to the general effect." But to what does this unity really apply? We may see clearly enough now that it applies first of all to the mind of the poet or reader, and only secondarily to the art-object itself. In what makes up our experience from day to day there is always some degree of conflict, a sinking in and partial breaking up of our natures. We may call it merely discouragement and disheartenment, but in truth it is really a partial breaking up of our own personality, of our identity. Poetry is one of the means of restoring the broken down unity, of bringing related parts into union and harmony, of renewing the sense of personal identity. The unity attained is a unity of mind. It is internal, not external. That we think it is external, that we believe we find it in the object portrayed, is simply one more tribute to the power of the poet. The unity that we find in any poem is the reflection of a newly unified mind, nothing more. All men agree when

they see a tree that it is a tree, and all but the colour-blind can tell whether the leaves are green or yellow; but the same men may never be able to agree about the beauty of the tree. It is so, too, with a poem. Lacking a unity of mind, one can find no unity in a poem. Unity results from the combining of images of scattered and perhaps hitherto unrelated bits of experience into some kind of organic connection. Experiences half-forgotten in the passing of the years; thoughts, feelings, and aspirations that have slipped the cog of memory; reminiscences of high and lofty pleasures that have grown dim and faded; the silent and faintly perceived yearnings of the heart; the powerful impression of truth and beauty of last week;—all these, through poetry, fall suddenly and delightfully into a newly unified group; they are brought, now through one poem, now through another, into oneness, into unity; and that unity belongs primarily to the mind.

If this is true, the nature of poetry reveals itself through three rather definite characteristics. It is a form of self-realisation; that self-realisation gives rise to a refined kind of pleasure; and the experience as a whole is marked in a distinctive way by unity. In order to mark poetry off more definitely from the other arts, we should doubtless have to mention language as the external medium through which this total effect is produced; but for the present I think we shall be within the limits of truth if we say that the nature of poetry

consists primarily in a pleasurable and unified form of self-realisation.

VII.

"One's ideal," says a poet, "must be above one, as a matter of course . . . it is as far as one can reach with one's eyes (soul-eyēs), not reach to touch." In the daily course of life this is true. But art enables man to "reach to touch" his ideal. Art is the means, the only effective means yet found by men, through which they may attain, in imagination at least, what they fail from day to day to achieve in action. Of the arts, poetry is chief. Poetry, then, is the most effective means that society has yet found of enabling it to come into temporary realisation of its ideals. Through poetry, more comprehensively and more satisfactorily than in any other way, man may transform the ideal in the future into the actual achievement of the present. In the moment of the æsthetic experience, something in the future that has been aimed at and longed for, only with defeated effort, becomes a reality of mind in the living, vibrating present. The ideal is not yet expressed in action; it has not, in that sense, been realised; but, on the mental side, it lies no longer in the future, it is present; it is in the *here* and *now*.

There is, too, in all the varied experiences which men have through poetry, in all the ends

and ideals which they may be said thus to realise in imagination in the present, a kind of progressive adaptation. New ideals are discovered and temporarily attained; old and familiar ideals, still unattained in action, are renewed on their mental side; here and there, as society advances and develops, some of these ideals are caught up and woven into the web of action. When, for example, the primitive man sings about the peas the white man eats, the pleasure in the prospect is an ideal to him; but when, later, he comes to the stage of agricultural efficiency in which he has all the white man's peas he wants, when his ideal has, so to speak, become a part of everyday life, he will no longer sing this song, except, perhaps, in a reminiscent way. In like manner the child at first commonly has for his ideals the thoughts of material things, such as toys or something to eat, which he would like to have for himself; but the moment he can have all these things, or when he wearies of the mere extravagance of his combinations, he goes on to something else as yet unachieved. To a less degree, because of their higher development, men do the same kind of thing: they gradually incorporate into the world of heat and stress some of the more efficient actions, the more elevated thoughts, and the more refined feelings which it has been the task of poetry to reveal.

For the most part, however, poetry represents forms of self-realisation which, in a sustained way,

never do become a part of everyday life. For the nature of poetry consists, as I have said, in helping us to a realisation, on the mental side, of precisely those types of experience which we are ordinarily unable to push over to the action side of life. Some of these experiences are perfectly familiar to us. They must, of course, have been discovered at some time. There was a day when we did not know them. But they have long since been a part of our thoughts, of our ideals, of our aims, of our purposes. Yet we have not been able to incarnate them into life; we have not been able consistently to hold them together. Just here one service of poetry as a form of self-realisation appears. It brings us once more up to the level of feeling, thought, or action which, however familiar it may be, we are unable to attain.

Take a simple example. Sympathy with animals is now a common ideal of mankind. Everyone, whatever his practice, may be said to be familiar with it. But not every one, as our humane societies would indicate, consistently lives what he knows; even those who are "grac'd with polish'd manners and fine sense" from time to time forget. Through selfishness, through indifference or neglect, men occasionally lapse from this ideal; they become a little callous; they forget that animal life calls naturally for sympathy. Then, let us suppose, they read Scott's description of the hunted stag:

“For jaded now, and spent with toil,
Emboss’d with foam, and dark with soil,
While every gasp with sobs he drew,
The labouring stag strain’d full in view,”

or his account of the death of the hunter’s horse:

“But, stumbling in the rugged dell,
The gallant horse exhausted fell.
The impatient rider strove in vain
To rouse him with the spur and rein,
For the good steed, his labours o’er,
Stretched his stiff limbs, to rise no more;
Then, touched with pity and remorse,
He sorrowed o’er the expiring horse.”

What is the normal result of reading such passages as these? It is to arouse in the mind of the reader precisely that kind of sympathetic feeling which has grown cold and narrow through neglect; it is to bring the reader into actual temporary realisation of an ideal which, though familiar to him, has slipped down from the edge of action, has ceased to be a part of daily life; it is to effect what Wordsworth calls a “salutary renewal” of an ideal which, for the moment, has broken down and been lost to view; it is to attain an ideal which, however well known and desired, has become dulled and blurred amid the difficulties, disappointments, and struggles of the market-place.

Through poetry men do something more than renew known but unattained ideals of life. They find new ones. The poet is, of course, the

pioneer. The reader merely follows. But the experience is common to both. Each, from time to time, finds some new end in life; and each, for the sweet moment of his full appreciation of the poem, comes into possession of that end. "I was as a man dying who had not read Shakespeare, and it was too late! do you understand?" asks Elizabeth Barrett. The statement bespeaks the revealing power of the master poet to another poet, of ends and ideals in life which would doubtless otherwise have been unknown. For the average reader this is still more true. As he beholds Othello and Desdemona lying in death while Iago lives, he discovers, perhaps for the first time, that the worst fate is not, like Othello and Desdemona, to suffer and die, but, like Iago, to be blind to love and beauty, and to be so circumscribed in character as to be incapable of suffering. He sees, as he follows Kent in *King Lear*, that self-sacrifice is not always the last word of duty, but that it may be the expression of a refined and unconscious egotism, amounting to sentimentality, and that life demands the exercise of good judgment as well as of good motives. As he follows Henry the Fifth he discovers that

"There is some soul of goodness in things evil,
Would men observingly distil it out."

As he follows Prospero he realises that knowledge is noble only when it serves, that duty comes before one's rights, that "the rarer action is in virtue than in vengeance"; he realises that

“ . . . whether we be young or old,
Our destiny, our being's heart and home,
Is with infinitude, and only there;
With hope it is, hope that can never die,
Effort, and expectation, and desire,
And something evermore about to be.”

VIII.

There are, then, these several kinds of self-realisation through poetry, though the experience itself is everywhere essentially the same. The difference may be said to lie in the degree of familiarity with the end or ideal involved. Sometimes the end desired is close to action, and is soon caught up into it. Sometimes it is familiar and of recognised worth, but, for some reason, neglected. Sometimes it is some great end of life which men can scarcely hope ever to make a reality, something which Aristotle would include under the “probable impossibilities” that are still worth striving for, something which is recognised as a worthy and desirable end in life, even if that end be attainable only in consciousness and not, it would seem, in action itself. Or, to gather this matter up in a single statement we might say: poetry as a form of pleasurable and unified self-realisation must represent either something new that is valued, or, if not something new, something known and wished for, but not consistently attained in feeling, thought, or action.

CHAPTER VII

The Need and Value of Poetry

"Man's feeble race what Ills await,
Labour, and Penury, the racks of Pain,
Disease, and Sorrow's weeping train,
And Death, sad refuge from the storms of Fate!
The fond complaint, my Song, disprove,
And justify the laws of Jove.
Say, has he giv'n in vain the heav'nly Muse?
Night, and all her sickly dews,
Her Spectres wan, and Birds of boding cry,
He gives to range the dreary sky:
Till down the eastern cliffs afar
Hyperion's march they spy, and glitt'ring shafts of war."
GRAY.

CHAPTER VII

THE NEED AND VALUE OF POETRY

I.

WE come now to our fourth and last question, "What is the need and what is the value of poetry?" Answers to both parts of this question have already been suggested. The need of poetry has been suggested especially by those standard conditions out of which we have seen the making of poetry itself to spring; the value of poetry has been suggested especially through the unique end which poetry as one of the fine arts is seen to serve. The mere existence and perpetuation of poetry might, of course, sufficiently vindicate its existence; but our task calls for analysis and explicit statement rather than for mere intimations and suggestions. We have now to make the intimations and suggestions of earlier pages explicit.

II.

And first, the need of poetry. It will be remembered that I have called poetry a form of

self-realisation. I may now go a step further and say that poetry is a biological necessity. If the expression sound somewhat audacious, we may say merely that poetry is a necessity in life; the truth remains the same. It is an unwritten law of life that man must continually realise himself; that is, he must come into actual possession of some of the ends which he strives to achieve. The end pursued need not be merely moral or religious; it may be commercial, practical, philanthropic, or aught else conceived by man as worthy. At times man may not be able even to determine what it is that calls him on.

“Dumb yearnings, hidden appetites, are ours,”

says the poet,

“And *they must* have their food.”

The italics are the poet's own, and serve to suggest precisely what I mean. However vague or clear, however worthy or unworthy the end may be, the demand for satisfaction is the same. Happily, some innate nobility in man stirs him to seek chiefly ends that are worthy, and the practical issues of life demand that these ends shall be clear. But every man is moved, nay forced, toward the attainment of some end beyond that which he has already achieved. Something calls to him with a voice as irresistible as the Sirens' cry; it calls him out of himself; it forces him to be other and

usually more than he is. This is the law of man's life; it is fixed.

One of the chief means in life of meeting this imperative call is poetry. It is a medium found by man in the course of his development through which he is able, as I have said, to realise himself. More than one writer has observed that one of the greatest sources of waste in life is man's failure to turn his visions of truth into action; in all stages of society, men fall to the lower levels of life, not for the lack of knowledge, but because they do not find a sufficient stimulus to bring them to higher action. What society evidently needs, then, is not so much people to idealise on what men ought to do, as effective means to stimulate men to attain to what they already know. Poetry supplies this stimulus. And it does so in a way that is paralleled by no other kind of social activity or expression. If the need effectively met by poetry represents a call that is imperative, then poetry must be a biological necessity. It is of course true that the ends and purposes which are realised through poetry are realised, so far as poetry can effect them, in imagination only; but that they are realised in imagination is the strongest assurance yet found by society that these ends and purposes may, finally, be realised in daily life. The pleasure that we find in poetry is not the result merely of a desire for relief from ennui; it is no mere poet's pabulum with which to "animate an hour

of vacant ease"; it is not the product of indulgence in sentiment; it springs, finally, from the assurance conveyed by poetry itself of the ultimate possibility of renewing and gaining ends that are desired in life, whether these ends be in thought, in feeling, or in action. So regarded, poetry is a social response to a call that is imperative. Poetry meets a need that is universal, affords a satisfaction that is unique. Were this not true, society would long since have sloughed off poetry as an encumbrance upon its development; for society has no sentimental regard for anything that does not, in some way, serve its life. From its earliest development, society has treasured poetry; has nurtured it, cultivated it. By its own silent token society has uniformly acknowledged that poetry satisfies an imperative need in life; is essential to life; is, indeed, a biological necessity.

III.

How and why this comes to be so we may now more clearly see. Man, we are commonly told, has a twofold nature, animal and spiritual. Out of this twofold nature there arise in his experience two general forms of demand; one is physical, the other is mental or spiritual. The physical demands are, of course, those connected with the bodily life of man; they are wants which belong to his physical organism, such as hunger, thirst,

exercise, rest, and sleep; these are uniform physiological calls of the body, daily imperative demands, which must be satisfied if man is to continue to live. But these physical wants or needs do not represent all the demands which man comes to know. For man is more than an animal; he is a being conscious of self; he has a mind, a soul, a spirit. And he has wants, moreover, which are peculiar to his consciousness and not known to animals; wants of a mental and spiritual kind—intellectual, ethical, æsthetic, and religious. Both classes of these needs or wants, the physical and the mental or spiritual, as one may choose to call them, are felt by all men, and they represent demands which are imperative in their call for satisfaction.

Certain important differences between mental needs and physical needs, differences which are significant for poetry, at once become evident. Physical or bodily wants are satisfied always through some kind of bodily action. If I am hungry, I eat; if weary, I rest. But with the wants of the mind it is different. They do not spring from the physical side of man's nature, and they cannot be satisfied merely through bodily action; they can be satisfied only through a modification, and usually a development, of personality. This is one difference. Another difference is still more important. Physical or bodily wants give rise at most to a feeling of pain which subsides when the wants are satisfied; the

desire is only temporary. But the wants of the mind give rise to something more: they give rise to a restless desire for permanent satisfaction.¹⁰ Somehow there arises the idea of satisfaction as a whole, a satisfaction that shall be enduring. What is desired can, perhaps, never actually be realised, but that fact seems not to matter; there is always a striving (which, it is true, usually exhausts itself in effort) to find a satisfaction of the wants or needs of the mind which shall be lasting.

With what success? How and to what extent is this demand for permanent satisfaction met? Man's daily life may be described as an attempt to satisfy his deeper desires under the limiting physical conditions of his environment. The result is always partial failure. "The pleasure of the world," says Meredith, "is to *bowl down our soldierly letter I*; to encroach on our identity, soil our niceness." And thus it is. Man never fully grasps his ideal; or if, now and then, he happily succeeds, another just as far removed immediately takes its place. The perfection he seeks for ever moves on; there is no sustained realisation of his ideals. Like the Holy Grail, his ideal ever invites him to follow, and ever eludes him in the moment when he would apprehend it; it escapes him and goes on before. It is his own creation; he has made it; it is a part of himself, or rather a representation of his ideal self, and yet he is never able fully to seize it and

make it his own. He feels, even painfully, his mind divided against itself. He cannot grasp *his* ideal. For ever he pursues, and for ever he remains separated from the desire of his heart; he gazes longingly at his ideal which is just beyond but still unattainable; he feels all that Stevenson felt when he said: "We look for some reward of our endeavours and are disappointed; not success, not happiness, not even peace of conscience crowns our ineffectual efforts to do well. Our frailties are invincible, are virtues barren; the battle goes sore against us, to the going down of the sun."

To realise the ideal in consciousness, even for a moment, means æsthetic satisfaction, joy, happiness, abounding life for man. To see it move off, to feel inability to attain it, means discouragement, despair, and even, in extreme cases, suicide. A certain degree of realisation of desired ends, attained somewhere and by some means, is, therefore, manifestly imperative; it is a biological necessity. If life is to be kept going, if it is to be worth living, hopes and ideals must have the warmth of proximity; the glow of their inviting favour must be felt; they must be believed in as realisable; still more, they must occasionally be attained.

IV.

It is precisely this function that poetry fulfils. Dealing with the needs of the mind,¹¹ it affords

more comprehensively and successfully than any other form of human activity or expression, the realisation in consciousness (not in action) of hopes, aims, desires, and ideals, and especially those of an ethical and æsthetic, and often also of a religious character.

It is neither possible nor desirable, on the moment, to attempt to illustrate fully the truth of this statement. Even a glance at almost any stage of the growth of poetry will confirm it; for, in all periods of social development, mental and spiritual needs appear which are more effectively satisfied through poetry than in any other way. Such a need and the effective means of satisfying it are revealed, for instance, in the song of the primitive man:

“I go to war, I am sent;
I go to fight, I am sent.
Clothe me with the iron breast-plate,
Give me the iron shield,
I am not strong, may I make myself strong,
I am weak, may I make myself powerful.”

Here it is evident that the primitive man fears his enemy, and that his chief need at this time is to recover his courage. And he recovers his courage by singing these lines. Unable as yet to reason about it, he has learned by experience that to sing of success is one of the most effective means of ensuring it. By singing this song, he attains in consciousness what he hopes

to attain in reality. As he sings he overcomes his weakness and his fear; he does not merely imagine himself to be strong and victorious; he *is* strong and victorious. The singing of the lines, then, fills a felt need, and it is a need that can be satisfied as well in no other way. By his singing and dancing, the primitive man works himself into a wild frenzy and ecstasy in which he imagines himself already victorious, and this inspires a confidence and courage which probably lead to victory. That he returns to his song in time of danger proves this. Like the child, he is free from pretence or hypocrisy in his attitude toward poetry; he has no false sentiment about it; he fears no charges that he lacks polite culture if he neglects poetry. He finds a value in poetry that nothing else affords in the same way, and that value consists in satisfying vital needs in his life. He finds pleasure in poetry, but he finds something more; he finds a satisfaction which helps him to endure and to perpetuate life. That he continues to make poetry, to sing it, to treasure it, and even to imagine divine beings who give it to him—all this is a tribute to the service which poetry renders in his life. To him it is a necessity.

As compared with the needs felt by the primitive man, those felt by the child are less serious and imperative. His poetry is more a diversion; it is less knit up with the serious business of life. Yet it holds a place logically the same as that of

both primitive and later poetry, for the child has needs which are satisfied effectively only by his poetry. These needs may be nothing more than feelings of restraint consequent upon being checked in his attempt to effect striking and revolutionary modifications in his environment; they may indicate no more than the caprices of his restless and ever-changing fancy; yet they are real needs, and call for satisfaction. And they can be even joyously satisfied through poetry. The energy which commonly finds expression in the destruction of toys and books may be diverted into the delightful play of fancy or imagination centring about the characters and situations of myth and story. So exquisite is the joy in finding this kind of satisfaction that even the memory of it was sweet to Wordsworth:

"Oh! give us once again the Wishing-cap
Of Fortunatus, and the invisible coat
Of Jack the Giant-Killer, Robin Hood,
And Sabra in the forest with St. George!
The child, whose love is here, at least, doth reap
One precious gain, that *he forgets himself*."

Tennyson evidently found the same kind of reminiscent delight in his *Recollections of the Arabian Nights*:

"When the breeze of a joyful dawn blew free
In the silken sail of infancy,
The tide of time flow'd back with me,
The forward-flowing tide of time;

And many a sheeny summer-morn,
Adown the Tigris I was borne,
By Bagdat's shrines of fretted gold,
High-walled gardens green and old;
True Mussulman was I and sworn,
For it was in the golden prime
Of good Haroun Alraschid."

Of adults as of primitive man and of children it is true that poetry springs from and satisfies needs which have the distinctive difference only of reaching further down into life. For primitive man and for children the needs of life are mainly external and sensuous. For civilised man they are more intellectual. The poetry of civilised man is, in consequence, more highly organised and more complex than the poetry of earlier stages of life. It is an attempt, by a kind of progressive adaptation, to express and to represent means of satisfaction for the ever-growing needs, not of the body, not of the whims of fancy, but of the mind and heart. In *Tintern Abbey*, for instance, Wordsworth tells us how he has satisfied needs of heart and mind, finding "tranquil restoration" and a "blessed mood," through memories of "beauteous forms" in nature; and he intimates how, through his poetry, we may do so too. In one passage he says:

"These beauteous forms,
Through a long absence, have not been to me
As is a landscape to a blind man's eye;

But oft, in lonely rooms, and 'mid the din
Of towns and cities, *I have owed to them,*
In hours of weariness, sensations sweet,
Felt in the blood, and felt along the heart;
And passing even into my purer mind,
With tranquil restoration:—feelings too
Of unremembered pleasure: such, perhaps,
As have no slight or trivial influence
On that best portion of a good man's life,
His little, nameless, unremembered, acts
Of kindness and of love. Nor less, I trust,
To them *I may have owed another gift,*
Of aspect more sublime; that blessed mood,
In which the burthen of the mystery,
In which the heavy and the weary weight
Of all this unintelligible world,
Is lightened:—that serene and blessed mood,
In which the affections gently lead us on,—
Until, the breath of this corporeal frame
And even the motion of our human blood
Almost suspended, we are laid asleep
In body, and *become a living soul:*"

Whatever the stage of social culture, poetry meets the needs of the inner life more comprehensively and successfully than any other form of social activity or expression. It enables man to grasp for a moment in consciousness something that he desires, hopes, longs for. Life and art—these are the only means of reaching our ideals, of tasting their true quality; and art is even more comprehensive and effective in this respect than life itself. Art would be impossible without life,

must ever refer to it and depend on it; but it transcends life; it accomplishes something that for life is impossible; it renews and restores worthy ideals which, in the monotonous routine of life, grow dim and faded; it discovers and reveals new ideals, and brings them all, new and old, to the verge of practical attainment by enabling each man to enter in consciousness into actual possession of his ideal. Poetry is acknowledged chief of the arts. It is the great source of man's faith that practical achievement of desired and worthy ends is continuously possible, and that even "impossibilities" are often worth striving for, if only they appear "probable," if only they are in accord with the tried and established principles of life. Poetry opens up an ever-widening path of progress; it reveals the grounds of true success in a concrete representation of the inevitable and necessary outcome of conduct; it takes the place of experience itself, removes life from the plane of its more sordid and limited aims, carries it on a higher plane to its logical and natural completion, and represents it in an ideal but not unattainable unity and wholeness. Following the path which life itself has marked out, that of putting one's self into things (personalising), and of making new combinations of materials for further ends, poetry represents by images forms of adjustment and attainment which satisfy the deeper needs in man's life. It does more. It enables man actually to realise in

consciousness what he desires, hopes, longs for. It transcends the physical, upon which man himself stands, without contradicting it, and makes combinations of the actual with the ideal. It sets a standard and a goal and, without even appearing to do so, points the way to the attainment of it. Poetry, as Emerson said, "is the effort of man to indemnify himself for the wrongs of his condition"; or, as Stuart Mill expressed it, it is "the lullaby of our woes." It is the most effective and satisfying means that man, in the long course of his development, has discovered or been able to devise, to show him how to satisfy the inner needs of his nature. The universality of art is at once the world's acknowledgment of a universal need and the evidence that there is a means of universal satisfaction; the pre-eminence of poetry among the arts is the indication merely of its superior range and capacity for satisfying inner needs that are imperative. Poetry is a biological necessity.

V.

In turning to the question of the value of poetry we have first to make an important qualifying statement, namely, that the value of poetry can never be satisfactorily indicated by reference to any outside standard. The value of poetry, that is, *is always contained in the experience to which poetry itself gives rise.* When we go outside of or beyond that experience we are going into

a field which, strictly speaking, has no direct connection with poetry at all; it is, at least, not an integral part of it. We may, for example, find that poetry has high moral value, but its moral value does not depend upon our being able to refer it to some standard; the highest moral effects of poetry, as every true reader knows, are those that infuse themselves into our minds without our ever realising how or whence they come. A choice has, then, to be made between some indefiniteness, on the one hand, and an analysis which must always be inadequate, on the other. Analysis might suggest that all the qualities named as marking poetry must always be found in equal measure. But this is far indeed from being true. Everywhere the æsthetic experience is the same; everywhere it has the same essential qualities; but in no two cases are these qualities in exactly like proportion. According as the poet's artistic purpose varies, now this, now that, stands distinctly out. Still, imperfect as our analysis must be, it is yet to be preferred to the indefinite, impressionistic attitude which vaguely finds a value in poetry, though it knows not how or where.

One form of value very commonly assigned to poetry is the moral. Living in a world where differences between good and evil are ever sharply drawn, man almost inevitably reflects his moral problems in his poetry. The morality usually assumes one or other of two forms; it is either

explicit, being crystallised into epigram or saw; or it is implicit, being contained in solution in the poetic product as a whole. The former type, as the more easily recognised, is the more widely known. Glean its moral epigrams, you rob poetry of one of its most popular means of appeal. Many persons gather little else from poetry. In reading a drama they will fail to see the interplay of some of the great forces of life, but they will seize upon such lines as these:

“He’s truly valiant that can wisely suffer
The worst that man can breathe, and make his wrongs
His outsides, to wear them like his raiment, carelessly;
And ne’er prefer his injuries to his heart,
To bring it into danger.”

As with Pope, to coin a proverb is to win the popular ear. And all this is good. The felicity of expression, if not always the superior elevation of the moral idea, phrases the idea into the mind with a strong sense of value that is a help in daily life.

But the deeper moral effect exerted by poetry is not so obvious. The finest moral influences that men derive from poetry, no matter what the social stage, slip into the mind almost unknown and unsuspected. The less evident and obtrusive, the more effective, as a rule, moral values in poetry really are. To set the heart-strings vibrating in response to heroic deeds, as in the primitive poem; to fine sentiments, as in Tennyson;

to noble characters, as in Wordsworth; to human sorrow and human guilt, as in Shakespeare; to the interplay of forces of good and evil, as in Dante and Milton; is unconsciously to elevate the whole moral nature. All poetry that is powerfully and artistically conceived stirs varied forms of moral sentiment, and upon the stirring and the satisfaction of these sentiments depend all the deeper æsthetic effects of poetry. Poetry has value because of its moral worth.

Intimately connected with the moral worth of poetry is its disciplinary value in respects, especially, that relate to the problems of living. Contrary, perhaps, to popular conception, poetry is a highly effective instrument for both intellectual and emotional discipline. It has a logic of its own as severe as that of science, a logic more difficult and more subtle because it is based upon more elusive conditions. Purely logical principles approach most nearly to intuitions. Principles and intuitions alike represent consistency with one's self, perfect organisation of details, and unbroken sequence of ideas. The poet, as a rule, proceeds by intuitions; the reader follows with logical analysis. To follow, in analysis, the intuitions of the poet is to pursue an end by methods which are logically and intellectually in the highest degree exacting. It is through such analysis that we are finally able to formulate, for example, some of the ultimate principles which permeate the work of the greatest poets.

But a no less important value in poetry lies in the discipline of the emotions. The importance of the emotions can scarcely be over-emphasised. All the highest manifestations of human nature centre, finally, in the emotions. Refined and cultivated rationally, emotion transforms morality into religion; reveals, in science and in art, the well-springs of originality; conditions, in life, worthy achievement and success; neglected and stifled, it ensures enfeeblement and failure; institutes narrowness of intellect and of morals; ordains the orgies of sense and grossness. Now, there is probably no more effective means of disciplining the emotions than poetry. It calls out all the higher sentiments, articulates them with truth, and carries them on to full expression. The constant reading of second-rate fiction, where the portrayal of life lacks truth, will, in comparison, so enervate and vitiate the emotions as often to blight a life. But to read the great poets and to follow them when they represent death, as at the close of *King Lear*, where we should ask for life; joy, as at the close of *In Memoriam*, where we should expect sorrow; law, as in *Michael*, where we might wish for sentiment; is to rise to the emotional acceptance of things not shaped by the hand of man. Poetry has a value which is disciplinary both for intellect and emotion.

If poetry is a moral force and an intellectual and emotional discipline, it is no less a practical aid. Through poetry we may gain a knowledge

not only of what life is but of what it ought to be. Poetry uses images; the images are symbols of things in life; and these images are so grouped in poetry that to perceive relations and apprehend effects signified by the grouping is to become aware of relations and effects in Nature herself; what is true of poetry fits life. Just as science reveals primarily laws of Nature, so poetry reveals primarily laws of personality. Nowhere are the laws of personality more truthfully and effectively revealed than in poetry. Genius is the human analogue to the creative power in Nature; and poetry is the anticipative grasp upon laws and conceptions of human nature that lie beyond the reach of ordinary men. Poetry is a storehouse of wisdom. Through it one may come to know life for what it really is. With a greater assurance of success than he can well have otherwise, one may arm himself for the battle of life. Poetry, in very truth, is a supplement to everyday experience of the most intensely practical character. It begins precisely where life itself falls off and fails; it carries it on to successful issue; it knits together its scattered and disparate bits of experience in a revealing way; it organises life afresh, and on a higher plane than that upon which we commonly live; it completes its partial achievements, and reconciles its failures; it brings its ideals, as I have said, to the verge of practical and actual attainment by establishing them in consciousness.

But poetry renders a higher aid than a service that is directly practical. Knowledge is power, but it is only in certain states of mind that knowledge becomes efficient. Deeper than all else in human nature lies the demand for an ever-renewed sense of personal identity and of continuity of consciousness. No idea is finally so hateful to man as the thought that his identity is being or may be finally destroyed or annihilated; no idea is so essential to his progress as the sense of his own continuity. And yet, strange to say, there are no ideas upon which the world at large seems more heartily to enjoy bringing its sharpest and heaviest blows. As Meredith phrased it in the words already quoted, the world finds its pleasure in bowling down our soldierly letter I; in encroaching upon our identity. All science is finally man's herculean effort to spell the one word "continuity" amid the manifold changes in Nature. What we call the struggle for existence is not merely the struggle to live, but the struggle to feel assured of the continuity, the orderly and consistent succession, and the unity of one's personality.

In all our varied social activity and expression, there is no one means of bringing about a salutary renewal of the sense of the continuity and identity of consciousness more effective than art; this, finally, is the *social significance* of art. Among the arts, there is no more efficient medium for effecting this end than poetry. Against

a powerful physical force, if the expression may be allowed, which tends to beat down man's identity, a physical force with which we wage perpetual war in the struggle for existence, there stands poetry as a powerful force renewing and re-unifying the mental life of man, a force that makes for compensation by re-emphasising man's sense of the identity and the continuity of his consciousness.

VI.

Poems might even be roughly classified from the point of view of continuity and of unity. The one group looks back; the other group looks forward. Of the two, the former, as the simpler, is, I believe, the more popular. This group might well be called memory-poems. Hood's poem:

"I remember, I remember
The house where I was born,
The little window where the sun
Came peeping in at morn;"

is of this class. *The Reverie of Poor Susan*, Gray's *Elegy*, the *Deserted Village*, many of the poems in *In Memoriam* are of like kind. Such poems, of which there is a very large number, build up the personality chiefly through the renewal of memories and the grouping of these into a unit which gives the reader a sense of being virtually the same person that he has been in time gone

by. This sense, in such cases, is the main source of pleasure. And this type of experience is not only justifiable but necessary; for upon the felt assurance that I am the same being that I have been, lies the guarantee that I shall be able to reach ideals that lie in the future, that I shall be able to become more than I am. All our study of history is but an unconscious search for the same kind of assurance; we seek to know what we may become mainly by finding out what we have been; history is the individual consciousness writ large.

But poems of this memory or reminiscent type are and must always be of secondary worth. Among us of the occident at least, the best lies, not in the past but in the future; we use our past chiefly as an assurance for the future. The poems which incorporate ideals that are unattained and, through the influence of their artistic organisation, bring us into actual temporary realisation of those ideals, are the poems which most effectively bring us into a unified state of mind. What divides us against ourselves is our ever-enduring sense of defeated effort; we have failed to grasp the ideal that we have so vigorously pursued. And what puts us in harmony with ourselves, and, not less important, with our environment, what unifies our disrupted minds, is the poem or play which enables us, as I have said, to realise ourselves, to grasp for a moment what we aim to become. The *Ode to Duty*, *Paradise Lost*, and *Hamlet* are

something more than pleasantly reminiscent; they effect a unification of personality by putting us into possession, on the mental side, of some ideal, recognised and longed for, but sought in vain in the world of dust and action. They project a future world based upon the past, it is true, yet necessary as a complement to the present; they express the "image of a better time"; they present or effect for us, in contrast to the conflict and division of the actual world, a world which is unified, a world in which we are conscious of dwelling in peace with ourselves and in perfect harmony with our environment; they effect the union of that divided state of consciousness which is typical of the struggle for existence and most evident in its bitterest forms; they reveal a world more reasonable than the one we know, because it is freed of its limitations and contradictions, a world which the poet constructs, indeed, in his effort to explain away these limitations and contradictions. And, doing so, they unify our minds; they give us a new sense of unity with ourselves and with life; they make us socially more efficient than we have been; they renew the loss of life which we suffer from day to day; they build us up afresh in hope and confidence. Whatever more special kind of value we may find in poetry, it is ultimately a feeling of unity attained and of continuity of experience emphasised that lies at the basis of all our sense of the value that poetry has for us.

CHAPTER VIII

Some Forms of Poetry Examined

"Higher still and higher
From the earth thou springest,
Like a cloud of fire;
The blue deep thou wingest,
And singing still dost soar, and soaring ever singest."
SHELLEY.

CHAPTER VIII

SOME FORMS OF POETRY EXAMINED

I.

THE questions which were asked in the first chapter have now been answered. On learning that poetry could not be satisfactorily defined, we turned to an examination of the material and the processes which go to make poetry what it is. The material we found to be the mental image; the processes which go to make poetry what it is we found to be (1) personalising, a process of self-projection by which the poet may be said to put himself into things and into persons, this self-projection being reflected in the images which the poet uses in his poetry; (2) combining, the grouping of these images; and (3) versifying, which, though it applies more directly to language and has at times a value identical with that of music, has its final justification in an enforcing effect upon the groupings of images. From an examination of the processes, we found that the nature of poetry consists in a pleasurable and unified form of self-realisation; the need of poetry we saw to be a biological necessity; and the value

of it, though often evidently moral, disciplinary, and practical, we found centred finally in contributing to the continuity and unity of consciousness.

Some attempt was made, in the course of the discussion, to illustrate these several topics by reference to different kinds of poetry, but the illustrations were necessarily limited. Poetry has a very wide range; forms representative of the various stages of its growth are almost countless; methods of external classification and distinction break down as consistently as they are made. Beginning and ending in feeling, poetry measures a course which extends all the way from a domain where the grouping of images is governed by feeling alone to a domain where the grouping, though it culminates in feeling, is made according to law and principle. The primitive man sings of the white man's peas and of kangaroo because, finally, he wants to eat them; the cultured man joys in the poet's representation of exalted duty because he perceives that the organisation of the images is founded on eternal truth; but primitive and cultured man alike seek poetry; both enter into a common experience. As part compensation for the inadequate illustration of the foregoing treatment I shall, in conclusion, briefly discuss a few representative forms of poetry with a view to showing, perhaps more conclusively, that the ideas set forth apply all along the scale.

II.

PRIMITIVE POETRY.—In personalising, the primitive man is unqualifiedly anthropomorphic. It is a mistake to think that he reads his experiences into things in the way that cultured man does; he has not yet been able to sort out the elements of his experience, and he does not yet know what belongs to himself and what to the object. Cultured man interprets things after the analogy of his own experience, but he knows that the thoughts and feelings connected with an object belong to him, not to the object. Primitive man believes that they inhere in the object. Such belief is reflected, for example, in the following lines:

“Rice-boats female, rice-boats male,
Cluck, souls of you,
Child [*i.e.*, *girl*] young, child male,
We wish to bring you slung-at-our waist homewards.
Souls of Padi [*of the kind called*] S’lotan,
Borak, Jambi,
Souls of glutinous-Rice, Maize, Bananas,
We bear you and climb up to the house.
Do not sleep within the soil,
Come hither and sleep within the mosquito-curtain.”

What usually stirs the imagination of the primitive man and sets it at the task of interpretation is wonder and fear. Not the magic and the charm, not the delight and the enchantment of Nature, but the defeat, the suffering, the terror, the

torture in which her granite heart seems to rejoice, the unintelligibility of life, "illness and danger, the apparently malicious obstacles of chance, the mysteries of darkness which, while preventing the beneficial activity of the senses, stir up his fancy, such are, in the first instance, the mysterious things which take hold of the powers of imagination."

In the combining of his images the primitive man is able, for the most part, to group only such images as represent objects that he has seen or dealt with at one time or upon one occasion. His grouping may be said, in contrast with later poetry, to be externally conditioned. Cultured man brings his images from the ends of the earth, and he groups them, not on the basis of their accidental connection in time, but of their inner similarity. But the primitive man perceives only evident similarities, and even these are but seldom reflected in his poetry; his grouping of images represents an experience as a whole; it is an aggregate of images which may be said to be time-connected; things are represented as being together because, in the primitive man's experience, they actually occurred together:

"Shield of Burru, club and spear,
Bring the throw-stick of Berar,
The broad boomerang of Waroll,
Belt, tassel, apron of Boodan:
Up! Spring, and take good aim
With the straight-poised emu-spear."

Being absorbed in the object itself, the primitive man finds but little suggestiveness in his images, he has but a small fringe for them; to him, poetry as an art is not contemplative; it moves with a rapid flow of rather independent images. The following lines are typical in their rapidity of grouping of images:

“Spear his forehead,
Spear his breast,
Spear his liver,
Spear his heart,
Spear his loins,
Spear his shoulder,
Spear his belly,
Spear his ribs.”

The list was complete only when the warriors had named every part of the enemy's body.

The grouping, too, though often representing needs that were serious and vital, may be said to be governed in primitive poetry almost entirely by feeling. Just as similarity is the first principle of image-grouping in all the great poetry of cultured society, so feeling is the first principle of grouping for the primitive man.

“The kangaroo ran very fast,”

he sings,

“But I ran faster.
The kangaroo was fat:
I ate him.
Kangaroo! Kangaroo!”

Not an idea but a feeling of desire lies at the basis of these lines.

But of the processes that go to make poetry what it is, the most important in primitive poetry is rhythm. I have already spoken of this. For the primitive man, rhythm and poetry may be regarded as practically synonymous. A swaying of the body, a beating of the breast, a clapping of the hands, a striking of shields or clubs, a beating of drums, or a dance was the regular physical counterpart of the words of a song or poem. The rhythm was known chiefly through physical movement; metaphors and similes were represented by gesture; words were a mere accompaniment; counted, indeed, for very little; often were without meaning. Added to their vague effect there was at times a refrain which served the purpose of keeping some one emotional chord vibrating, as in the lines:

“I approach the village,
Ya ha he ha, ya ha he ha;
And hear the voice of many people,
Ya ha he ha, ya ha he ha;
The barking of dogs,
Ya ha he ha, ya ha he ha;
Salmon is plentiful,
Ya ha he ha, ya ha he ha;
The berry season is good.”

Grosse quotes from Man: “Their principal effort is evidently to keep strictly in time. In

their songs everything is subordinated to rhythm, even the sense. . . . They take the greatest liberties in them, not only with the form of the words, but even with the grammatical construction of the sentences"; and with regard to the Australian corrobory we are told that "it is astonishing how accurately the time is kept; the tunes and the movements are all in unison." In this way primitive man often gave pantomimic representations of jealousy and hate, of desire and friendship, and especially of love and battle. "If the fury of war is upon him, he dances wildly, but solemnly, in the strict, gymnastic style handed down by tradition; if he is in love, he dances and expresses his amorous feelings in immodest gestures; if he seeks intercourse with his gods and demon-spirits, he dances until he is intoxicated by his own ecstatic fury, believing that the demons have entered his body and are using their power for magic and prophecy." As he dances, he frequently gives utterance to meaningless syllables, such as ae-o, ae-o; wa-wa-kuh, repeating them again and again until they exert an almost hypnotic influence over him. Rhythm, and especially the rhythm of movement accompanying words, is the distinctive mark of his poetry.

That the primitive man realises himself through his poetry probably requires no further illustration; and that his poetry represents a need in his life and has a value which may be seen to culminate in a new-found unity and sense of identity,

especially of a social character, calls, perhaps, for no further amplification. One point I shall, however, illustrate through a form whose value might not at first be evident. The primitive man's song of grief might seem, at first, to contradict our theory; it might seem to signify the opposite of unity and identity of consciousness. There is high, if later, authority to the contrary. Goethe speaks of the "divine worth of tones and tears"; Plato says there is a "natural hunger after sorrow and weeping"; and Kant has pointed out that any experience has an attraction and value merely as a furtherance of life. The songs of grief among primitive men confirm these statements. The wives of a deceased chief among the Tongans beat their breasts and faces, and repeat the following lines over and over again, without any order, during the whole night:

"Alas! woe is me!
Alas! he is dead!
Alas! how I respect him!
Alas! how I lament his loss!
Alas! here are his ruins!"

The women of the Sandwich Islands sing a song, part of which I give, on the death of a chief:

"Alas, alas, dead is my chief;
Dead is my lord and my friend;
My friend in the season of famine,

My friend in the time of drought,
My friend in my poverty,
My friend in the rain and the wind," etc.

Strange as it may seem, it is still pleasurable self-realisation, still a renewed sense of the unity and continuity of consciousness, which is here being attained. In all such cases, pleasure, not real pain, predominates. As Burke says:

"It is the nature of grief to keep its object perpetually in its eye, to present it in its most pleasurable views, to repeat all the circumstances that attend it, even to the last minuteness; to go back to every particular enjoyment, to dwell upon each, and to find a thousand new perfections in all, that were not sufficiently understood before; in grief the *pleasure* [but not the happiness, the writer might have added] is still uppermost; and the affliction we suffer has no resemblance to absolute pain, which is always odious, and which we endeavour to shake off as soon as possible."

Despite the nature of the subject, then, the singers of these songs derive pleasure from them. The imagination is chiefly concerned with pictures of former joys and happiness. It renews, builds up, and combines for itself all images that relate to this happiness; it even adds to it by finding, as Burke says, a thousand "new perfections," and unconsciously exaggerates in order to express its own satisfaction. In all such cases there is an awareness of being in momentary possession of a

happiness and joy that is all the sweeter because it has been so rudely shattered in reality.

That it is finally the unity of consciousness that is emphasised through the poetry of primitive man appears in an almost unique way. For the unity attained, though doubtless individual, is here more obviously social. Later poetry is individual; one person makes it; and its effects, whatever they may finally be in a social way, are primarily individual. Poetry among primitive peoples has a socialising influence which, the dance excepted, is unparalleled by any other function or exercise which they carry out. To unify and emphasise the continuity and identity of the social consciousness may be said to be the distinctive and final function of primitive poetry. Practical demands, sharply and keenly drawn as they are in the daily struggle for life, tend to separate men. For primitive man one great unifying power is poetry. Both in origin and effect primitive poetry relates in every way to the people; it springs from "the folk"; there is no individual maker of it, no poet, and usually no individual singer for it; its effect is socialising. Primitive man is an egoist; he is selfish, cruel, and destructive of all that stands in the way of the accomplishment of his personal ends; he is no altruist, and often he cares little or nothing about his tribe except as it helps to conserve and protect his own interests. As a result, disintegration eternally threatens the established social

order; society tends rapidly to break down. Here poetry renders its definite service. It welds the social unit; it builds it up afresh and reinforces it; it unites and combines the members of a crude and unstable society by producing in them a common state of mind; it renews its sense of identity.

The poetry of the primitive man, then, according to our view, is in no fundamental respects different from our own; it springs from the same original causes; meets the same general ends; and, even like the poetry of cultivated society, is beautiful to the minds that make it. Haberlandt's statement about primitive forms of art in general might well be restricted to the primitive man's poems:

"However strange and unæsthetic they may appear to our ungladdened eye, they are nevertheless fashioned in the main according to the same great, fundamental and æsthetic principles of rhythm and symmetry which govern the highest creations of Art; consequently we find amongst all races the same universally valid laws of artistic labour. As the mental horizon of primitive man was confined within very narrow limits, and the principal difference between barbarism and civilisation consisted in the quantity of material at the disposal of his thinking faculties, so was the area of his æsthetic ideas of Art restricted to a degree, and this poverty of sentiment made his Art productions rude and plump (!)."

III.

POETRY FOR CHILDREN.—As a secondary stage in the progressive adaptation through which poetry expresses and meets needs in the inner life of man we may turn to poetry for children. This kind of poetry is often composed by adults, but none of it lives without the approval of the child himself; often children themselves compose. We begin, too, with an advantage. No one is closer to the poet than the child; nowhere, perhaps, does poetry appear so unmistakably in its purity. Here the principles that make poetry what it is appear in unadorned and unconcealed form; they are more evident than in other kinds of poetry, if only because of the extremes to which they are frequently carried. Everywhere there is exuberance and abandon.

In personalising, the child is the unrestrained poet. He is ignorant of the real world and of its laws; he knows no necessity of conforming to either; a restless curiosity spurs him on to explain things according to his own ungoverned fancy. He has, in consequence, a vast and invisible world, greater and more wonderful than any poet's world, into which he can retire at a moment's notice, and which he is free to people with his own efflorescent creations. All that he creates is in some way but a reflection of himself, but it is often, from the point of view of the prosaic world, a fantastic and startling modification.

Extremes he seems to love; things are either huge and wonderful, like giants and magicians, or diminutive and subtle, like fairies and sprites; but, great or small, all that he creates in some way reflects his own life. With unsullied delight he cries:

“A frogge would a-wooing go,
 Heigho, says Rowley,
 Whether his mother would let him or no
 With a rowley powley, gammon and spinnach,
 Heigho, says Anthony Rowley!”

Perfectly free he is in his unquestioning person-alising of animals and birds as he sings:

“Who killed Cock Robin? I, said the Sparrow,
 With my bow and arrow, I killed Cock Robin.

“Who saw him die? I, said the Fly,
 With my little eye, I saw him die.”

With a naïve spontaneity and a freedom unparalleled even by the master artist himself, this potential poet breathes his life into things and people as he builds up his world of unrestrained fancy; everywhere he projects his own experiences into them; he humanises them.

His combining of images is equally unrestrained. Life, for the child, is not yet a serious thing. In the world of the primitive man, the adult-child of society, there is a sustained note of seriousness. He must capture and slay animals in order

to obtain food; he must protect himself from the elements; he must ward off enemies. The child knows none of these demands. His food is set before him; he has no enemy who seeks his life; he does not, in consequence, sing of peas the white man eats, nor of the killing of foes; he is free to let his mind go fancy-free into a world of elysian delight. With a joy never again to be equalled in life he groups images of things into most startling combinations. "Hey diddle diddle," he cries,

". . . the cat and the fiddle,
The cow jumped over the moon!
The little dog laughed to see such sport,
And the dish ran away with the spoon."

How delightful! What an inviting picture! The cow jumped over the moon! What a refreshing break from the staid conventionality of nursery life! Let us not interrupt the perfect vision by asking where these things came from or why they act as they do. The fiddle, the cow, the moon, the little dog, the dish, the spoon,—all these the child has seen a hundred times in his life; some of them he has for his very own. But he has never seen them act in such a fascinating way; his restricted world never showed anything so interesting by half; the monotony of enforced restraint and unsatisfied desire of the nursery-room are all overcome as if by magic; they are replaced by a world in which every act and turn

of these self-like beings is startling to the point of thrilling and fear-inspiring delight; the child is goose-flesh with the ecstasy of pleasing terror.

And what he joys in bringing together is images of things, not mere qualities of things. He wants his experiences in the lump. He may be a "best philosopher," but if he is, he knows it not and cares less; he is not so much interested in the characteristics of things as he is in objects themselves. In his combinations, accordingly, he does not attribute special qualities to things; there are practically no distinctive adjectives and no marked comparisons in the poetry of children. The poetry of the child is built upon broad lines; it groups things rather than discovers hitherto unobserved qualities in them. The child's combinations, moreover, are governed almost entirely by feeling. The intrusion of law he resents; the delights of his fancy must be unrestrained. It may be that later on he will have to recognise something in poetry called high seriousness, but he knows it not now as essential to his perfect joy. Tragedy, as a rule, he does not like; and he drives to the centre of poetry as dealing with the happiness of man when he begs for assurance that some desired ending to a story is "really true." On moral issues he is often shockingly frank. Cunning, deception, and subtlety of action he openly and avowedly delights in. When the wily Ulysses outwits Polyphemus; when Jack brings the giant

tumbling down from the heights of his bean-stalk; when David, the shepherd lad, slays Goliath with a sling-stone, the joy of this little half-savage knows no bounds. No moralist, the child is yet the true poet; the cry is ever for something new, for combinations of images just a little more startling and wonderful than any that have yet been.

In versifying, too, the child is, if not a master-poet, at least surpassed by none in his love of rhythm. Like the primitive man, he combines with his poetry at times a good deal of actual rhythmical movement. Frequently he marks off, in some unconscious way, the measures as he reads or sings. But even if it be only the music of the verse he gets, none is more appreciative than he. The simplicity of the ideas in his poetry leaves him free for the unfettered enjoyment of the music of the verse; his images, many of them, as in the "rowley powley, gammon and spinnach," have a touch of mystery and wonder that adds to the magic of the music; and rime, alternately stirring and satisfying expectation, lends the final touch of ecstasy.

"Sing a song of sixpence,
A pocket full of rye,
Four and twenty blackbirds
Baked in a pie,"

he sings. He does not know what a song of sixpence means; he never saw rye; and though he

may have seen a blackbird he is not won away from the charm of the music by the vision of having twenty-four baked in a pie. What appeals to him is the verse. The magic of the s's in *sing*, *song*, *sixpence*, of the p's in *sixpence* and *pocket*, of the f's in *full* and *four*, of the b's in *blackbirds* and *baked*, the simplicity of the rhythm, unmistakable as it is and enforced by the rime, strike his ear, and pass on into his blood with a sensation as indescribable as it is impossible to renew in later years. The lines sing themselves; they do not mean much, but they are full of the seductive charm of a rhythm that carries the mind into a world as fascinating as it is unexplored. Versifying in poetry, as I have pointed out, sometimes has value as musical effect, but more often as an enforcing of the groupings of images. What the child gets from verse in most cases is undoubtedly the music; his images are vague, intangible, rapidly floating; they are not grouped with a direct regard for the laws of Nature and of personality. To the child, verse is music, and music, heard through the medium of language, is poetry.

That the child realises himself through poetry in a way that brings pleasure and unity to his mind, that poetry meets a need in his life that can be met so satisfactorily by nothing else, and that there is a distinctive value for him in all this, are facts which, I trust, need no special argument or illustration. If one does not know from recollection, one may easily learn by observation

that the child, more than all others, believes in his world of illusion; he *is* that which he reads about. Those images which are definite in his mind are thought of for the moment as existing in the real world, and always in some way he participates in the life of which they form a part. Freed from irksome restraint, this facile idealist immediately becomes what he desires to become; he realises himself. That he does so in respects which will not endure the stern test of reality does not now matter; he is not answerable to the world of law in any complete way as yet. And that there is a need of this kind of activity for the child becomes evident not only in the avidity with which his imagination responds to such phrases as, "Once upon a time" or "Long, long ago," as he peoples his world with supernatural beings. It is shown also in the distinctive value which this kind of activity has for him, for at no stage and through no means, probably, is personality built up with as great rapidity and facility as it is through the poetry of children. Nothing else that the child does serves more effectively to unify his life or to make him quite so conscious of his own identity. From occupying a position in life in which all the most attractive kinds of conduct are consistently checked, and his best hopes rudely shattered, he becomes a very god. He creates and he destroys; life and death are in his hands; he cares not a whit for the real world, nor whether his soul-satisfying combinations

accord with its repressive and irksome laws. It is true that tears of disheartenment and defeat fall from him on slender accident; but it is also true that through his poetry he builds up his personality into new forms with a freedom and facility unparalleled in later life. Through his poetry he becomes aware of himself as a person; he renews and strengthens his own sense of identity. It is this same activity, involving the same processes, reaching the same ends, showing the same kind of value wherever it appears, that enables the child later on to accept, even with joy, truer and more serious representations which do not conform in so absolute a way either to the dictates of his own will or to the volatile desires of his own heart.

No one, as I have said, is more akin to the poet than the child. To a degree which even the poet himself can never hope to equal, the child is free from the serious business of life; no one has a shorter course than he to the world of imagination. He has little or no self-interest to interfere with his entering into the life of things. He personalises with a freedom unparalleled. He combines images into forms so striking as to compel the admiration of the poet himself. He hears a music in the rhythm of his verse that is unmatched by the music of the spheres and too sweet for our dull ears to hear. He realises himself and comes into possession of his ideals with a readiness and spontaneity that must strike the most happy

with a touch of envy. Building up his personality into forms forever new, he emphasises his sense of identity with a success unmatched elsewhere in the poetic experience; the joy of the perfect æsthetic experience is his. "Read some more," cried a lad to his mother. "More of what?" she asked. "More of God," he said seriously. The happiness and the sanctity of his meeting with his elder brother I may perhaps be allowed to describe in another's language:

"When the Poet came (for he comes to all children), we called him by no name. He might have been one, or he might have been many; with a finer instinct than that of the bookmen, we took what he gave us without question. With a catholicity which has never been ours since, we assigned him to no race and to no clime. If there is one thing more than another with which we connected him, it was music. . . . And the Poet? Our furthest recollection with regard to him begins with Christiana. She had been saying over some foolish and jingling verses to us, when of a sudden out flowed a line that was strange and different.

'Over the hills and far away,' said Christiana.

She went on with the other foolish words, and we heard them, and forgot them, but these we remembered:

'Over the hills and far away.'

What was it like? It was like the dusk when the rain is beginning to fall, very softly indeed, and in

the west a gleam from the sunset is still lingering, and there is no one in sight. It made us feel a little sad, a little older, and alone in the world. We created for ourselves a long and fading highway, and down it in the soft rain went trooping many people, and not one of them ever came back again. It was a highway that was always full, yet always empty."

IV.

SENSUOUS POETRY.—As an early form in what we may call the poetry of cultured man we may take sensuous poetry. This is the poetry which celebrates chiefly the gratification or the pain, the joys or the sorrows, of the senses. It includes, at one extreme, poetry which is merely atmospheric and devoid of meaning, and, at the other, poetry which is primarily descriptive, but which begins to carry with it some suggestion of moral and intellectual quality. The images in it refer to things of sense; there is little or no thought; the aim of it seems to be chiefly to stir reminiscent delights of sense or to picture imaginary new ones. It is the poetry characteristic of the young poet. Keats strikes its true chord when he writes:

"O, for a draught of vintage! that hath been
Cool'd a long age in the deep-delved earth,"

and he sustains the note when he somewhere cries for a life of sensations rather than of thoughts. Milton, Shakespeare, Shelley, Tennyson, all at first have a poetical orgy of the senses; all at first

write sensuous poetry. Sensuous poetry is the early poetry of cultured man.

The personalising in this form of poetry is of the kind which points chiefly to a direct reading of sense experience into things. We may see what the character of it is in such lines as:

"This sunlight shames November where he grieves
In dead red leaves, and will not let him shun
The day, though bough with bough be over-run,
But with a blessing every glade receives
High salutation; while from hillock-eaves
The deer gaze calling, dappled white and dun,
As if, being foresters of old, the sun
Had marked them with the shade of forest-leaves,"

or in the lines, perhaps even more consciously descriptive:

"Now came still Evening on, and Twilight grey
Had in her sober livery all things clad;
Silence accompanied; for beast and bird,
They to their grassy couch, these to their nests,
Were slunk, all but the wakeful nightingale.
She all night long her amorous descant sung;
Silence was pleased. Now glowed the firmament
With living sapphires; Hesperus, that led
The starry host, rode brightest, till the Moon,
Rising in clouded majesty, at length
Apparent queen, unveiled her peerless light,
And o'er the dark her silver mantle threw."

As compared with the poetry of primitive man and the poetry of children, the sensuous poetry

of cultured man is more conscious and more restrained in its personalising. Primitive man believes that a spirit really does inhabit the object of his thought; and the child, though he may have wavering doubts about the more extreme forms of his personalising, allows himself to believe for the sake of the delight which he finds. But cultured man is aware of the illusion; the crude anthropomorphism of his early brother he has corrected by science; the personalising which he now carries on is more rational and, in consequence, more restrained; it is carried out with a clearer recognition of the essential difference in the nature of objects themselves; things are not made to parallel a larger part of man's life than their nature will admit; there is a nearer approximation to truth.

The combining of images, too, is more restrained than in primitive poetry or in the poetry of children. Sensuous poetry shows something of the same external character in the arrangement of images that there is in early poetry, but there are, except for purposes of conscious fancy, few unrestrained flights. Such a passage as the following is characteristic:

“Full many a glorious morning have I seen
Flatter the mountain-tops with sovereign eye,
Kissing with golden face the meadows green,
Gilding pale streams with heavenly alchemy;

Anon permit the basest clouds to ride
With ugly rack on his celestial face,
And from the forlorn world his visage hide,
Stealing unseen to west with this disgrace:"

As a rule, the process of combining is more consciously carried out than in the early forms. We may see this, for example, in the lines:

"Hereat the youth
Looked up: a conflicting of shame and ruth
Was in his plaited brow: yet his eyelids
Widened a little, as when Zephyr bids
A little breeze to creep between the fans
Of careless butterflies:"

There is, too, a closer conformity to Nature, as in the lines:

"As on a dull day in an ocean cave
The blind wave feeling round his long sea hall
In silence,"

or in the lines:

"Nigh upon that hour
When the lone hern forgets his melancholy,
Lets down his other leg, and stretching, dreams
Of goodly supper in the distant pool."

One of the most significant things in this kind of poetry, when considered from the point of view of the combining of images, is the gradual ingress of intellectual and moral quality. When Keats cries:

“O, for a draught of vintage!”

there is no suggestion of any moral idea connected with the image. But when Cassio in *Othello* cries:

“O thou invisible spirit of wine, if thou hast no name to be known by, let us call thee devil!”

it is evident that wine has, so to speak, been brought into connection with some moral law. As a rule, it is only as the image of man is introduced into poetry that true moral quality may be said to enter into it; the work of Wordsworth is exceptional. Gradually, purely descriptive poetry becomes more significant in its combinations; the images, still vivid, are introduced, not for their own sake, not even for the sensuous impression which, as a whole, they create, but for what, in their relations, they may be said to signify. Tennyson is a master in the making of little pictures; but, almost imperceptibly, the descriptions become something more than perfect pictures; they take on moral or intellectual quality. A striking example of this more significant kind of sensuous poetry is to be found in Tennyson's description of the blind man:

“And like to him whose sight is lost;

“Whose feet are guided thro' the land,
Whose jest among his friends is free,
Who takes the children on his knee,
And winds their curls about his hand:”

"He plays with threads, he beats his chair
For pastime, dreaming of the sky;
His inner day can never die,
His night of loss is always there."

These lines are wonderfully vivid; they make a masterpiece among the poet's little pictures. But this description is not merely for its own sake. The third line especially suggests an heroic acceptance of a bitter fate, and an attainment and serenity of character on the part of the blind man which is of high moral import and value. Tennyson was in sorrow over the loss of his friend Hallam; those were days when he walked on his own tears. As he created this little picture of the blind man, he did something more than entertain himself with a merely novel grouping of images. Putting his own life into another's life, he became the blind man, and through him the moral master for the time over his own crushing sorrow. In passages of this kind we advance gradually from sensuous poetry to the poetry of law and principle.

It requires but little illustration to show that the versifying of sensuous poetry has more varied and complex forms of metre, and more delicate and varied harmony and melody than has early poetry. Generally speaking, it is now the effect of verse as an enforcement and support for unusual combinations of images that makes itself apparent; the music of verse is less a separable

and independent thing; it is more intimately knit up with the images themselves. Still, the separation is not immediate or absolute. There is a kind of poetry the images of which cause a partial reinstatement of some of the actual physical adjustments connected with the original experiences themselves. I can best make evident what I mean by citing a passage:

“Oh, our manhood’s prime vigour! No spirit feels
waste,
Not a muscle is stopped in its playing nor sinew
unbraced.
Oh, the wild joys of living! the leaping from rock up
to rock,
The strong rending of boughs from the fir-tree, the
cool silver shock
Of the plunge in the pool’s living water, the hunt of
the bear,
And the sultriness showing the lion is couched in his
lair.
And the meal, the rich dates yellowed over with gold-
dust divine,
And the locust-flesh steeped in the pitcher, the full
draught of wine,
And the sleep in the dried river-channel where bul-
rushes tell
That the water was wont to go warbling so softly
and well.
How good is man’s life, the mere living! how fit to
employ
All the heart and the soul and the senses forever in
joy!”

As the reader follows this passage he is likely to draw a deeper breath, brace his muscles, perhaps clench his fist. As the images suggested by the poet pass before his mind, something of the original muscular experience connected with the things represented seems to be renewed. It is a familiar fact that in thinking of things we commonly experience some degree of muscular adjustment or change; as we think, we furrow the brow; we tighten the muscles of face and neck. And we prefer, as a rule, such expressions as seem, in calling up images of things, to stimulate such muscular adjustment. The preference, for example, of such an expression as, "The mountain *rose* before us" to the expression, "The mountain *was* before us" is practically universal. The reason for the preference seems to lie, ultimately, in some kind of muscular satisfaction which the one expression affords over the other. With the primitive man and with the child, rhythmical movement as an accompaniment is unrestrained by convention; but with the cultured adult actual physical movement to mark the rhythm of his poetry is, as a rule, tabooed. It is perhaps not too much to say that the pleasure which the man of culture finds in this partial reinstatement of muscular activity, effected chiefly by the use of words of motion, is a survival or a reproduction in part of that actual movement, probably rhythmical, which in the original experience would be its undoubted accompaniment.

From the more obvious we pass to the more subtle uses of verse effects. Tennyson is a master here, and I shall quote but an instance or two to represent the abundant illustration that is possible. In the line:

“ . . . his arms

Clash'd; and the sound was good to Gareth's ear”

there is a variation from the normal arrangement of the main pauses. In the line:

“Of some precipitous rivulet to the sea”

the unaccented syllables are skilfully multiplied. And in lines such as:

“So strode he back slow to the wounded king”

or

“The long day wanes: the slow moon climbs: the deep
Moans round with many voices”

there are verse-effects so subtle as to be impossible of accurate characterisation. In poetry which we may call sensuous there is a gradual modification in verse-form from the type which obviously has an element of muscular adjustment in its effect, to a type which finds its appeal in effects which, even if they cannot always be accurately characterised, are at least not so avowedly physical.

That sensuous poetry has its unifying effect

upon the mind is a fact too familiar to need extensive illustration. We need only go back to the original sense-experience to see that the connection between an invigorated or glowing bodily state and an æsthetic state of consciousness is very close. A whiff of a sea-breeze, sunlight and rarefied atmosphere, rhythmic movement of the body, all have an effect which seems in some measure to produce that state of mind which we call æsthetic. This close connection seems to be borne out by sensuous poetry. The vagaries of the seasons will not always allow the sweet physical charm and the restoring influence of a beautiful day in springtime, but these pleasures can be caught and renewed through the poem which, like the *Green Linnet*, celebrates such pleasures.

In one respect, however, we are liable to be deceived. We are apt to think that the pleasure which we derive, and the unified state of consciousness that results, come directly from the imagined sensations themselves. It is not so, however. Not the sensation, even partially reinstated, which results from the imagined object, but the unified mind which is conceived of is, in all such cases, the source of our pleasure. Keats makes this unmistakably clear. He writes of life as a place

“Where men sit and hear each other groan.”

Then he hears the nightingale sing, and his senses ache with joy:

"My heart aches, and a drowsy numbness pains
My sense, as though of hemlock I had drunk,
Or emptied some dull opiate to the drains
One minute past, and Lethe-wards had sunk:
'T is not through envy of thy happy lot,
But being too happy in thine happiness,—
That thou, light-winged Dryad of the trees,
In some melodious plot
Of beechen green, and shadows numberless,
Singest of summer in full-throated ease."

Here, then, is happiness! After all, it is something possible and real in this world. But what brings to Keats the deep sense of happiness is not the sweet notes of the bird's song merely; it is not the harmony of sounds even; it is, as the lines themselves indicate, rather the imaginative attainment, through the song, of a perfectly unified and happy state of mind. So with Shelley. To him the song of the skylark is not a series of sensations; it is a state of mind. Did he but know half the gladness that the skylark must know, he would compel the attention of the world to his message:

*"Teach me half the gladness
That thy brain must know,
Such harmonious madness
From my lips would flow,
The world should listen then, as I am listening now!"*

Just as we respond to the laughter and gambols of children, not because there is anything beautiful

in them, but because they are suggestive of a care-free, innocent, and perfectly happy state of mind, so we respond to what we call the beauty of the song of a bird, stirred, not by the notes, but by our own imagined conception of a state of mind of unalloyed happiness and joy. Poems which celebrate the joys of sense produce a like effect.

As representative of the inner needs of man's life, sensuous poetry is of only secondary importance. The history of literature shows us that poets themselves pass from it to a type of poetry marked by the incorporation of law. By its nature, dealing as it does with sensations, it is peculiarly dependent upon the past. It is largely reminiscent, and only secondarily ideal in the sense of looking to the future; it belongs chiefly to what I have called the memory-poems. Burns shows this when he writes:

"Thou 'll break my heart, thou bonie bird,
That sings upon the bough;
Thou minds me o' the happy days
When my fause luvè was true."

In its value as a discipline for either intellect or emotion, and in moral worth, sensuous poetry must always of necessity be of only second-rate importance; in its ultimate value, it tends to emphasise the mere continuity of consciousness rather than the identity of it; for the sense of renewed identity comes chiefly through those poems which put us in possession of ideals that belong,

not to the senses, but to the mind; ideals that lie, not in the past, but in the future.

V.

POETRY OF LAW OR PRINCIPLE.—

“O! how much more doth beauty beauteous seem
By that sweet ornament which truth doth give!”

In these words Shakespeare has touched the vital point of difference between the higher and the lower forms of poetry; in the last analysis, it is a difference of truth. As incorporating the fullest measure of truth the drama supersedes all other forms of poetry. A lyric, be it never so perfect, can give expression to but a single emotion; an epic, though it deal with a world-theme, reveals less of the inner life of man than of action; but the drama, and especially tragedy, unfolds the subtleties of character, and reveals them in their relation to the laws of human nature and of human destiny. The drama uses the highest type of image that can be used in poetry, that of man, and it presents it more truthfully and adequately than does any other form of poetry; in the organisation of its images, the drama is unparalleled as a medium for the embodiment of reason and truth, especially as these relate to personality; in its verse-form, it passes on to modifications and kinds so skilfully woven and so unobtrusive as to leave the reader unaware how or where he has

garnered their subtle effects; feeling, with all that it signifies, is in the drama still the end of poetry, but it is feeling that has gone beyond the raw sensation of bodily and organic effects; it has become feeling or sentiment that is subject to reason and law; it is deep yet strong, quiet but contemplative. The drama is best represented by tragedy; in my brief illustrations, I shall draw chiefly upon the tragedies of Shakespeare.

Of personalising in the drama there may be said to be three general stages or degrees. (I) There is, first, that which contributes to character-impression. Dealing with subordinate things, it affords cues to the thought or mood of the central characters; often it helps to create the atmosphere in which the characters move. More clearly than if he had told us, Shakespeare enables us to know Macbeth's state of mind when he makes him say:

"Come, *seeling* night,
Scarf up the *tender* eye of *pitiful* day,
And with thy *bloody* and *invisible* hand
Cancel and *tear to pieces* that great bond
Which *keeps* me *pale*."

"Not a mouse stirring" helps to create the oppressive and audible stillness of the opening scene of *Hamlet*, just as "Paddock calls" helps to project evil into the first scene of *Macbeth*. In *King Lear*, where the forces of evil seem to have been completely let loose upon the world, the animals and

the birds named are almost all of the ignoble type, —the fox, the polecat, the wolf, the kite, the crow; and always where similarities to man are pointed, it is to some inferior quality,—“hog in sloth, fox in stealth, wolf in greediness, dog in madness, lion in prey.” The mild and trustful Duncan, walking unsuspectingly into his death-trap, notes that

“This castle hath a *pleasant seat*; the air
Nimble and *sweetly* recommends itself
Unto our *gentle senses*.”

And Banquo, with a like sense of beauty which seems not unconnected with his moral stability, has observed that where “the temple-haunting martlet”

“Hath made his pendant bed and procreant cradle”

the air is “delicate.” Into a thousand things Shakespeare has projected some bit of his life,—an action, a thought, a feeling, and always in some way the humanised expression helps to illuminate character or to create atmosphere.

(2) It is, of course, into the characters themselves that Shakespeare has poured the riches of his life. Hamlet, Othello, Macbeth, Edmund, Iago, are all real characters; they are what Coleridge calls “ideal realities,”—types without the loss of individuality. Each character is a whole, an organic unit; none is even in part

merely a reflection of the author's religious predilections, of his moral prejudices, or of his intellectual foibles. Shakespeare, in all matters essential to truthfulness of character, has freed himself of the limitations of his age and country; he has risen to the heights of universal and invariable truth. In no respect, perhaps, is this achievement more strikingly revealed than through the heightened expression of the characters. True to life, Shakespeare's characters yet do not speak as men and women of the real world; in any situation they say, not what we should say, but what we should doubtless wish to say, had we the poet's insight and range of imagination. The Queen, when Hamlet has revealed to her the darkness of her deed, cries:

"O Hamlet, thou hast cleft my heart in twain,"

and Hamlet, in his reply, says precisely what we feel we should like to have said in such a situation:

"O, throw away the worser part of it,
And live the purer with the other half."

What affects subsequent action in any situation is not what people actually say, but rather what they wished to say but could not. Shakespeare was well aware of this fact; and in his portrayal of his characters he has consistently penetrated into and revealed the inner thought and inner emotion that is the pith of truth in the heart of

each. Into his characters Shakespeare has projected his life; and they are vivid and real because he has done so with unparalleled fidelity to eternal truth.

(3) No poet can find a higher image than that of man; yet it may be said of Shakespeare that he has given us such refinements of the life of man as pass on into a world inhabited by beings of pure imagination. Still, this world is true to reality. The ghost of Cæsar, no matter what the Elizabethans themselves believed, represented for Shakespeare a very real though perhaps intangible force in life that by no means passed out with the fall of Cæsar's body. So, too, of spirits and fairies. Nowhere is the spiritual element in human nature more powerfully yet daintily embodied than in Ariel. Living on the shore of an unexplored sea of spirit, touched with life which looks both ways, chafing to be free, Ariel brings us hints and intimations of happiness and dreams in a world which, though far removed, is yet in harmony with our own. A delicate spirit, Ariel was yet once in the service of the foul witch Sycorax. Discovered and released only by the man of wisdom, Ariel was seen and intelligently directed by him alone; was the means of disclosing conspiracy and crime, of making the evil repentant, of controlling the base, yet promising, Caliban; was, through song, the unseen guide for Ferdinand to the source of his happiness in the person of Miranda. Ariel

may, in life, be identical with the beauty Keats found to be truth, with the refined idealism of Shelley, with Wordsworth's motion and spirit that rolls through all things; but, whatever it be, Ariel seems to represent something that is a real power in life; something not limited to human conditions yet responsive to human appeal; something that, as opening the gate into a world of boundless futurity, most effectively expresses itself in music:

"Where the bee sucks, there suck I;

In a cowslip's bell I lie;

There I couch, when owls do cry:

On the bat's back I do fly

After summer merrily.

Merrily, merrily, shall I live now,

Under the blossom that hangs on the bough!"

In the combining of images, the drama reveals the same kind of progressive adaptation. Speaking of Shakespeare, Gray said, "Every word in him is a picture." Even in the simpler forms of combination, such as "death's dateless night," Shakespeare has advanced beyond the point where, as in primitive poetry or the poetry of children, the image itself is something of absorbing sensuous interest. When an image is of something interesting in itself, as that of the kangaroo to the primitive man, it loses in suggestiveness; it creates no fringe. Shakespeare's combinations of images, even those that are subordinate,

uniformly stir the mind to further combinations which have been suggested by the central one. Such combinations as "dusty death," "unhatch'd practice," "stabb'd with laughter," "cloud-capp'd towers," stir the imagination almost endlessly. Shakespeare's skill in creating the individual expression is easily recognised and has long since been acknowledged; but his most distinctive power is revealed in the combinations which he effects among his central images. He deals with images of men and women; and he relates these images in such a way as to incorporate universal truth. It is idle to attempt to reduce the truth of great drama to philosophic form, but Shakespeare himself might almost be regarded as touching the vital point of his tragedy in one line spoken by the Player King in *Hamlet*:

"Our thoughts are ours, their ends none of our own."

We have the power of choice, but the effect or outcome of our choice is something not shaped by the hand of man. Everywhere Shakespeare's tragic characters are grouped and brought into relation under the implied conception of causal necessity. The justification of this law, especially on its ethical side, we can often perceive at once. That Macbeth should reap a whirlwind seems but the natural and inevitable consequence of his own perverted ambition and crime; that Othello should sink himself and Desdemona in ruin appears only as a logical consequence of his

being, with regard to men like Iago, "as ignorant as dirt." In each case we recognise the working of a moral law which we already know to be true.

In his grouping of images Shakespeare implies laws and principles, too, that cross our own conceptions of truth at right angles; and these, under his revealing power, we see are also true. Self-sacrifice, as in Kent, is not necessarily the last word of duty; it may pass over into sentimentalism and refined selfishness for, as Friar Laurence says, "Virtue itself turns vice, being misapplied"; good motives, almost invariably a justification of conduct among men, are no protection against calamity unless buoyed up and guided by insight and judgment; trustfulness and confidence in men is a mark of magnanimity of character, as in Henry the Fifth, but it becomes weakness when it is over-weening, and the true view is to regard even

". . . the full-fraught man and best indu'd
With some suspicion."

These are truths or laws of life; we perceive that they are valid; and, in some sense, we justify them.

But Shakespeare goes further. Not a part of life is his theme, but the whole of it; not that only which we can explain and justify to ourselves, but the truth also that ends in mystery. That Macbeth should pay the penalty of his crime with his life, that Othello should reap from ignorance consequences more bitter than death, that even

Hamlet, letting his opportunity slip through his nerveless fingers, should become cankered with discontent and bitterness, and finally die,—all this we can see a cause for, and in some measure we can reconcile it, for there is the clear suggestion, in each case, that these characters had the power within them to shape events otherwise. But that such a staggering burden should be laid at all upon Hamlet's innocent shoulders; that Desdemona, Ophelia, and Cordelia should be the pathetic victims of the egotism and selfishness of their stupid fathers, that they, themselves innocent, should suffer for the sins of others; that Lear, for the slip of a venial pride in seeking to flatter his egotism by a harmless formal display and protestation, should be cut to the brains, become a man more sinned against than sinning, and pass, with but a moment's tranquil restoration, into that band of sorrow who know not themselves, on down to death itself,—all this, however it may be the law of life, we cannot reconcile. What the power is that makes things so, we do not know. It cannot be a law and order that is "just and benevolent," "for in that case the spectacle of suffering and waste could not seem to us so fearful and mysterious as it does"; it cannot be fate, "whether malicious and cruel, or blind and indifferent to human happiness and goodness: for in that case the spectacle would leave us desperate or rebellious." We cannot name this power, nor can we reconcile what it effects; yet this is what

Shakespeare represents; this is the truth in conformity with which he has grouped his central images in tragedy; this is the law of character and of human destiny which permeates and dominates this world as Shakespeare has seen it. Nowhere else in poetry is there the same range or fidelity in the principles according to which the central images of poetry are built up into new and revealing representations of life; nowhere else does it become more evident that the worth of poetry depends upon the character of the images and the manner of their arrangement.

Of Shakespeare's versifying I have, I trust, already said enough to make it clear that it serves the same general ends served elsewhere by verse. This is not the occasion for discussing the technical modifications that Shakespeare effected in his verse; one or two suggestions will suffice. At first his verse-form was highly mechanical, frequently rimed, thought-and-feeling bound, and often monotonous; but by eliminating the rime, by interjecting extra end-syllables, by using weak endings and run-on lines, Shakespeare developed a verse-form in which the more obvious effects were suffused, and the movement fixed according to the march of thought or feeling. Such lines as:

"And out of question so it is sometimes,
Glory grows guilty of detested crimes,
When, for fame's sake, for praise, an outward part,
We bend to that the working of the heart"

and:

“Here in this island we arrived; and here
Have I, thy schoolmaster, made thee more profit
Than other princess’ can, that have more time
For vainer hours, and tutors not so careful.”

represent the extremes of difference between the beginning and the end. And the difference is one which has been demanded by the changed nature of the subject dealt with. Shakespeare’s verse is not only in harmony with his theme; it supports and enforces it. Even the arrangement of scenes and acts may justly be regarded as but an extension of the principle of rhythm to the action; it helps to make a unit of the play. No one is a greater master than Shakespeare in the use of dramatic contrast; frequently, as in *Hamlet*, a highly comic scene follows upon a scene of the greatest tragic impressiveness. In all such cases the effect is the effect of rhythm. The peaceful juxtaposition of two like scenes gives no effect of rhythm and but little effect of advance in action. What is needed is contrast. Through contrast we distinguish the several parts as really separate, and we apprehend the fact of their compatibility and mutual support toward a total effect. Even what we call dramatic technique has its value as a rhythmical support to the more obvious rhythm of verse.

Finally, the nature of poetry and the ends it serves are nowhere else so adequately revealed as in the drama. The drama is but the literary expression of an irrepressible instinct for mimetic

representation that goes back to man's earliest history; it is the culmination of one of the first and simplest methods devised by man for the imaginative realisation of what he fails to attain in reality. Through the drama, more effectively than through any other form, man can realise himself. No other form is so comprehensive. Once he has broken away from the lure as well as the need of things physical; once he has passed beyond the enchantments of mere entertaining fancy; once he has acquired the power to seek immortal truth rather than mere diversion and narcotic forgetfulness, man is prepared to receive what the drama alone, and tragedy in particular, can yield him. He can realise himself on heights of moral achievement which rise above the valleys of sentimentalism; he can put himself in harmony with laws of thought and emotion that are not peculiar to poetry but true wherever truth may dwell; he may, above all, renew and strengthen that sense of personal identity which gives him his fighting basis for the present and his hope for the future. If the happiness as well as the virtue of man is the theme of the drama, then the way to be happy, as the drama reveals truth to us, is to live according to the laws of Nature; not merely the physical laws which science knows, but those invariable and unalterable laws of personality for which no mere philosophic formulation is possible; laws not learned by education merely, but by some power infused at birth into

the human heart and unfolded alone by art. And even though one may not find the happiness he seeks, even though the delights of the drama seem after all an illusion, the true reader will find in this form of poetry freedom from the prejudices of age and land, from the predilections of biased morals, from the importunities of passing desires, from conditions which make him sad or cheerful merely by chance; he will gain a height where, with trembling ears, he no longer hears the voice of detraction, catches no evil suggestions, finds purpose and achievement, hope and attainment, with amity, gratitude, and contentment, dwelling in concert, accepts with equability of temper any evil that is untinged with the sense of conscious wrong; and when, crowned with his threescore years and ten, he still does not, and sees that he cannot, fully understand, he will yet be able to say with that man of wisdom born of the greatest dramatist's brain:

"Be cheerful, sir.

Our revels now are ended."

NOTES

¹ He might better have said "feelings"; were it not for the desired alliteration he would, perhaps, have said so.

² The expression "language as uttered sounds" is used merely to point a difference from the "silent" printed page. Language is not merely uttered sound, of course. The question herein involved is: Can words made audible make poetry? Apart from the need of breaking down the naïve, external conception of poetry which is held by some people, it is only because, under some conditions, uttered sounds, thought of as something separate from meaning or thought, *do* make something to which we must occasionally concede the name of poetry that there is any need of pointing a difference here.

³ It is of some importance to observe that not everyone would see just what I have seen. Most people do, as a matter of fact, visualise; they "see" things in imagery; so that most people would, in this case, see some kind of rose, definite in form and colour; but others would get only a dim, fringy, colourless image. Some would not see a rose at all; they would get chiefly an image of its *smell*. Still others, having perhaps recently torn their hands on a rose-bush, would get chiefly an image of *touch*, probably of the prickly stem of the rose; or of *sound* merely, as of the rustling of the leaves and the rubbing of the stems as they sway in the wind. A few would get no image directly representing any experience connected with the rose itself; they would merely see or hear the *word* "rose." But everyone can call up some kind of image to represent the rose; and this image, either by greater or less correspondence to the rose itself, or merely through artificial connection, as in the case of the word "rose," stands as the representative in the mind for the object itself. Moreover, it is true that, for all *practical* purposes, *any image will do*. Any image, that is, will do, whether it be a vivid picture of a rose or merely the word "rose," which enables us to act properly toward

the object. Whatever be the form of my image of a rose, I must be able at least to distinguish it from other things, the image of a bird, for example. And for poetry, though the vivid, picturing image is undoubtedly the best, any other will do. Experiment has shown that, given any image of a thing, the mere word "rose," for example, all other forms of imagery, definite and clear, and even an image of the colour of a rose, can, though perhaps with a little effort, be called up. Poets are made by nature to "see" things; they use, therefore, chiefly "visual" images; and though most people who are not poets see things also, there are many who do not. These are the people who, *prima facie*, will be limited in their appreciation of poetry. They cannot readily call up images like those of the poet; and it will, consequently, take them longer to enter into the experience of the poet. As they read Scott's line, for example, they cannot see the rose "as 't is budding new" *without time and effort*; and for this the ordinary reading of poetry does not allow. But, apart from other considerations, anyone who will make the effort to call up the same type of images as those used by the poet can, so far as this condition is concerned, appreciate poetry if he wants to.

⁴ I have occasionally put a part of a poet's language in italics.

⁵ The entire poem should be read as an exceptional expression of this general idea.

⁶ The difference between this kind of significant personalising and the less serious and effective form of it may be seen by comparing the expression "brief candle" with Coleridge's little poem *To my Candle*:

Good Candle, thou that with thy brother, Fire,
 Art my best friend and comforter at night,
 Just snuff'd, thou look'st as if thou didst desire
 That I on thee an epigram should write.
 Dear Candle, burnt down to a finger-joint,
 Thy own flame is an epigram of sight;
 'T is *short*, and *pointed*, and *all over* light,
 Yet gives *most* light and burns the keenest at the point.

The italics are Coleridge's own. The word "short," accordingly, takes on special significance. It was deliberately selected. But we recognise that these lines are playful and fanciful rather than an expression of something closely connected with life.

Coleridge has seen the similarity not as between a tragic life and a candle, but between an epigram and a candle. And an epigram is something that is physically "short." Coleridge therefore uses this word. "Brief" would have been less suitable. In the one case a candle is like a human life, in the other it is like an epigram. Both are true; but we value the one expression above the other in the same proportion in which we value life more than an epigram.

The reader may be interested to compare with these examples Wordsworth's statement:

"There never perhaps existed a schoolboy who, having, when he retired to rest, carelessly blown out his candle, and having chanced to notice, as he lay upon his bed in the ensuing darkness, the sullen light which had survived the extinguished flame, did not, at some time or other, watch that light as if his mind were bound to it by a spell. It fades and revives—gathers to a point—seems as if it would go out in a moment—again recovers its strength, nay becomes brighter than before; it continues to shine with an endurance which in its apparent weakness is a mystery—it protracts its existence so long, clinging to the power which supports it, that the observer, who had lain down in his bed so easy-minded, becomes sad and melancholy; his sympathies are touched—it is to him an intimation and an image of departing human life,—the thought comes nearer to him—it is the life of a venerated parent, of a beloved brother or sister, or of an aged domestic; who are gone to the grave, or whose destiny it may soon be thus to linger, thus to hang upon the last point of mortal existence, thus finally to depart and to be seen no more."

⁷ It is interesting to observe that neither passage would be so poetic if it came earlier.

⁸ The example was suggested by Grosse.

⁹ It is this fact, fundamentally, that accounts for the varied interpretations of this play. Shakespeare has left the reader unusually free to determine for himself what Hamlet's duty is, with the result that readers commonly fix upon something which is but a reflection of their own standards.

¹⁰ Certain other differences, not altogether unrelated to poetry, are worthy of notice in passing. In the first place, physical wants and the wants of the mind differ with regard to the results of attempted refusal to acknowledge their demands. In the

case of physical needs or wants, attempted denial produces results which are immediately evident and appreciable. Thus, one cannot deny himself food and sleep without the effects becoming at once apparent. But in the wants of the mind, attempted denial has results which bestow themselves so secretly, and reveal themselves so remotely, as often to make it appear that they have not been produced at all. Indifference to moral, æsthetic, and religious demands seems frequently to have no evident deleterious effects. Men appear to flourish and prosper despite the neglect, and often, it would seem, almost on account of it. The primary results of such neglect are, of course, just as immediate, just as inevitable, and just as real as are the results from neglected physical needs; and they are even more fatal from being "silent and unremitting." To think good or evil is to reap its blessings or incur its penalties no less certainly than to do it, for as a man thinketh so is he; but these blessings and penalties are not so immediately apparent, and are therefore often judged to be unreal. In the one case the body suffers, and the evidence of it is at once discernible; in the other, the mind or soul is affected and the results are hard to read. This fact has affected the general view commonly taken of the value of poetry as to its service in life.

Again, it is evident that physical wants, or what we may call the demands of life on its practical side, tend to separate men; they create and emphasise diversified forms of feeling. But the wants of the mind or spirit tend, in being satisfied, to unite men; they invoke the same kinds of feeling. Readers of poetry unite with an author in a feeling common to him and to themselves. Those who listen to music, however diversified or even antagonistic their feelings may be when they assemble, are unconsciously reconciled and united through the production of a common feeling. The primitive dance and modern play illustrate the same thing. Any attempt, indeed, to satisfy the wants of the mind necessitates social contact. One can eat, sleep, drink, exercise, rest, alone, but no one can be an æsthetic or moral or religious being, alone. The existence of some other person, indeed the dependency upon them for coöperation, is always implied. The means of satisfaction of these wants is pre-eminently social. Poetry, art, religion, have each of them originally and primarily a socialising function and influence. And

though this is more easily apparent in primitive society, as in the dance and song, it is none the less true of cultured society as well.

¹¹ Some forms of poetry, of which more extensive examples are given in a later chapter, may at first appear to be exceptions, especially songs of primitive men, and some of our own drinking songs and sensuous poetry which celebrate the joys of physical indulgence. Examination will show, however, that in all cases where desires of the senses are celebrated it is the mental pleasure of memories of experiences mingled with the pleasure of imagined recurrence that is being celebrated rather than a definite physical want that is being expressed. When the physical want makes itself really felt it is followed, as I have suggested, by some form of bodily action, not by singing about it. Compare, for example, Caliban's "I must eat my dinner," an expression which Shakespeare, with evident purpose, makes of the physical class, with his:

"let me bring thee where crabs grow;
And I with my long nails will dig thee pig-nuts;
Show thee a jay's nest, and instruct thee how
To snare the nimble marmoset; I 'll bring thee
To clust'ring filberts, and sometimes I 'll get thee
Young scamels from the rock."

Consider also the lines from Keats:

"O, for a draught of vintage! that hath been
Cool'd a long age in the deep-delved earth."

And Burns's:

"O, Willie brew'd a peck o' maut,
An' Rob an' Allan cam to see."

The mere physical sensation is always a different thing from the pleasure of reflecting upon it. All "physical" poetry relates primarily to the mind, not directly to the body; for was not Tam "O'er a' the ills o' life victorious"?

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